

1.0 Purpose and Scope

1.1 This policy applies to Staff and volunteers contact with service users and exists to safeguard the interests of service users, staff and volunteers.

1.2 All Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to apply and maintain professional boundaries with service users and this is explained in the induction and supervision time.

1.3 The Manager is responsible for monitoring practice on professional boundaries and challenging Staff and volunteers where standards are not being upheld, including taking disciplinary action if appropriate.

1.4 Where professional boundaries have been overstepped, they should be addressed as soon as possible.

Policy Guidelines

2.0 Relationships and contact within work

2.1 Staff and volunteers should be approachable, open to fair challenge and criticism; they should not be seen as intimidating or inaccessible.

2.2 Staff and volunteers should be careful not to influence service users with their own beliefs or personal values (e.g. whilst Staff and volunteers should inform service users of local places of worship so that they can make a choice whether or not to attend, they should not take them to their own places of worship).

2.3 Staff and volunteers should be aware of their own potential to influence vulnerable service users and not promote their own beliefs upon service users.

2.4 Staff and volunteers should respect the service user's right to privacy and not discuss one service user's details to another service user. Staff and volunteers should never enter into gossip or hearsay with a service user.

2.5 Staff and volunteers should understand the difference between befriending (a professional relationship made to meet the service user's needs) and becoming a friend (a non-professional relationship which meets the needs of both people).

2.6 On no account, should Staff and volunteers enter into a sexual relationship with a service user.

2.7 When Staff and volunteers offer advice to service users, they should provide service users with sufficient information to make informed choices.

2.8 Staff and volunteers should also be aware of where they do not have knowledge/ experience to give advice and refer the service user to appropriate agency or a member of Staff and volunteers within the organisation.

2.9 Staff and volunteers should be aware of the need to empower service users and therefore not "do everything for them" but encourage and enable them to achieve outcomes themselves.

2.10 Staff and volunteers should be realistic and honest about the services they provide to service users and not give them false hope or make false promises.

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2.11 Where Staff and volunteers know service user prior to them accessing the service, this must be made known to their manager.

2.12 Staff and volunteers should treat service users with dignity, respect and in a non-judgemental manner.

2.13 Staff and volunteers should never apply favouritism to any service users.

3.0 Contact Outside of the Workplace

3.1 Staff and volunteers should never give out their personal contact details to service users.

3.2 Staff and volunteers should not allow service users to visit their homes.

3.3 Staff and volunteers must not encourage service users to develop relationships with their relatives or friends.

3.4 Staff and volunteers who encounter service users in a social situation outside work should be pleasant and polite if approached by the service user but should not encourage any prolonged social contact.

3.5 Staff and volunteers should not approach service users in any social situation other than to say hello.

4.0 Physical Contact

4.1 Physical touching between Staff and volunteers and service user is to be discouraged and avoided.

4.2 Service users may misinterpret physical contact as affection outside of the professional relationship.

4.3 Service users may also see physical contact as an expression of favouritism e.g. where a Staff and volunteers member hugs one service user and not another.

4.4 All Staff and volunteers should be aware of the risks of physical contact with a service user that, it may be misunderstood and may lead to Staff and volunteers being vulnerable to allegation of inappropriate professional behaviour or worse.

4.5 In specific distressed situations when dealing with emotional support, when service user opens up to discuss sensitive matters, sometimes a pat on the forearm of the distressed service user may be appropriate.

4.6 All Staff and volunteers should apply these principles so that there is consistency of practice within the organisation.

5.0 Financial

5.1 Staff and volunteers should not enter into any financial transactions with service users, including buying, selling, exchanging or bartering goods and services. This also includes service users entering into financial transactions with the relatives or friends of Staff and volunteers.

5.2 Where Staff and volunteers handle finances of service users e.g. in circumstances where the service user has language support needs or where their support needs are too great for them to deal with their finances themselves, they should only do so in a clearly defined work instructions e.g. service users should sign a declarations of consent. Clear records should be kept of all such handling of finances on behalf of the service users.

5.3 Staff and volunteers should never become Power of Attorney, trustees, executors or beneficiaries of service user's wills.

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5.4 Staff and volunteers should not lend their personal money or possessions to service users; any money lent to service users has to come from the organisation's petty cash/ allocated fund, authorised by an appropriate person (CEO, Manager, Senior Worker) and should be signed for.

5.5 Staff and volunteers should not borrow money or possessions from service users or volunteers.

5.6 Staff and volunteers should not accept any offers of labour from service users for their own benefit.

5.7 Staff and volunteers should not accept gifts from service users under normal circumstances.

5.8 However, where service users would be upset or insulted if a member of Staff or volunteer refused a gift, or if cultural norms were being broken, the receiving of that gift should be recorded.

5.9 Gifts may be accepted under the circumstances when giving of the gift is not done nor out of duty, but as heart led thanksgiving, or appreciation.

5.10 Service users should be told when they enter into the service that it is generally against the rules and good practice guidelines of organisation for Staff and volunteers to receive gifts from service users.

6.0 Use of Cars

6.1 Staff and volunteers should not give service users lifts in their cars unless for support purposes see 6.2. Staff and volunteers are not permitted to give lifts to others they are not supporting.

6.2 Where it has been defined as acceptable by the organisation for service users to be given lifts by Staff and volunteers e.g. so that the Staff or volunteers can attend a meeting with and on behalf of the service user, the appropriate car insurance must be obtained.

6.3 Normal social, domestic and pleasure car insurance does not cover service users and if there were any accidents, the Staff and volunteer may be personally liable for damages. This means that Business insurance must be sought. Copies of car users insurance policies should be given to the Business Manager.

6.4 Where Staff and volunteers have to attend a meeting with/on behalf of a service user, they must strive to use public transport as a far as possible.

7.0 Managing Boundary Issues

7.1 Staff and volunteers may unwittingly be put in a position where their relationship with service users is compromised, or to be drawn into conversations or situations where their boundaries are being stretched or crossed. In some situations the fine line between good and bad; practice may not always be obvious or clear.

7.2 A Staff and volunteers should seek the guidance of the manager if they are unsure about the nature of a relationship developing with a service user, or if they need advice on how they intend to deal with a situation. Similarly if the manager requires advice, they must consult with the Chief Executive Officer.

7.3 Boundary issues should be discussed with the manager and during team meetings on a regular basis, and on occasions specific team training or facilitated discussion may be appropriate.

7.4 There are some events and arrangements planned with service users that are highly valued by them but may present potential boundary issues. In these instances there may be times a need to exercise flexibility and discretion in the interpretation of this policy. Such instances where there are clear potential benefits to service users should be brought to the attention of the manager. The situation will then be 'risk assessed', and a record of any necessary safeguards agreed by the manager must be kept. This approach should ensure that transparency is maintained in agreeing variations and that positive risk taking is managed.

8.0 Monitoring and Review

8.1 Rowan Alba managers will be responsible for the general monitoring of these guidelines.

8.2 Transgressions will be reviewed with individual Staff and volunteers, but in some cases it may be appropriate to record examples for discussion as part of Staff and volunteers training or discussion at Staff and volunteers meetings.

8.3 Significant and/or repeated breaches of this policy will lead to disciplinary action, up and including dismissal.

9.0 Office Procedures & Contractual Hours

9.1 Staff and volunteers must keep to contractual hours at all times unless for the following reasons: -
Emergency client work to be approved by the Manager prior to the action.