

# Personal Boundaries Policy

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## DOCUMENT TRACKING SHEET

### Personal Boundaries Policy

Version	Status	Date	Issued by	to/approved	Comments
5.0	<b>December 2022</b> Policy was archived and included within the Staff Handbook – Our People Policies. Decision made to separate all policies and re-instate as individual policies in April 2023				
5.1	Draft	July 2023			Review of document to ensure it is up to date and fit for purpose
6.0	Approved	July 2023	Joint Negotiating Forum/ Chief People Officer		Approved Assurance given to Workforce and OD Committee – Sept 23

### REFERENCES

[Employment Act 2002](#)  
[ACAS Code of Practice 2003](#)

### RELATED POLICIES/PROCEDURES/protocols/forms/leaflets

Induction Policy	
Standards of Conduct Policy	

### SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Date	Author	Page	Changes (brief summary)

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## 1 WHAT THIS POLICY COVERS

- 1.1 This policy outlines KMPT's expectation for employees maintaining appropriate professional relationships and professional boundaries with service users.
- 1.2 Employees and Workers working within KMPT 's Services have a responsibility to provide safe, effective and caring services to service users within their care. Whilst it is recognised that employees must establish a rapport with service users and provide friendly and accessible services, they are responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries between themselves and service users. The rights and needs of service users should be respected at all times. Owing to the nature of the illness/disability of service users, within KMPT, the relationship between the service user and worker is not one of equal power balance. Employees and Workers must recognise and understand that they are in a position of trust. This trust must not be abused at any time. It is essential, that all interactions between service users and employees must be seen in terms of a professional relationship. Employees must have a clear framework within which to carry out therapeutic interactions.
- 1.3 Due to the potential for positions of power to be abused and professional boundaries overstepped KMPT makes it clear that it is the responsibility of individuals to maintain professional boundaries. Failure to meet this responsibility may lead to formal disciplinary action being taken against them. This duty extends beyond the period of time that the service user is under the care of KMPT and applies to all current and ex-service users, whether they are or have been under the direct care of the individual employee or not.
- 1.4 Employees and Workers must ensure that working relationships are not misread or confused with friendship or other personal relationships. This is essential in order to protect service users at a time when they may be vulnerable. It is also to protect employees from any risk of potential allegations.
- 1.5 This policy clarifies the role of employees providing direct or indirect care to service users and the division of boundaries between service users and employees/workers to enable consistent approaches to service users.

## 2 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 This policy is written regarding all service users who are either currently receiving care or treatment or who have had past care or treatment and for all employees providing direct or indirect treatment irrespective of grade or discipline.
- 2.2 It also covers all areas of service, whether on a ward, in a residential service, day service or in the community.
- 2.3 It is the responsibility of all employees and workers, to have a full understanding of this policy and ensure that the requirements are adhered to.
- 2.4 It is the responsibility of managers to ensure their employees are aware of this policy, to educate and ensure their teams are working within this policy and to make this policy available to their employees where requested.

## 3 DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 **Therapeutic Relationships** - A therapeutic relationship is a professional relationship between the service user and the employee/worker in which the latter has a responsibility for

ensuring that objectivity is achieved at all times.

- 3.2 **Boundary** - When the 'line' between the professional and personal relationship is crossed and the relationship between the service user and the employee/worker moves from being objective to subjective. An indication of this can be found in the list in Section 6, which identifies some types of unacceptable behaviour (this is not an exhaustive list).
- 3.3 **Service user**- A service user is someone in receipt of care and also known as a patient, client or resident. A service user can:
  - 3.3.1 Be directly receiving care from the employee
  - 3.3.2 Previously have received care from the employee
  - 3.3.3 Be receiving care from another service and have no direct contact with the employee/worker
- 3.4 **Worker** - This is anyone who is undertaking any work for KMPT, whether directly employed or seconded in a professional capacity, volunteers, students, agency, NHS Professional (NHSP) workers or contractors.

## 4 POLICY IN PRACTICE

- 4.1 When an employee/ worker thinks there is a risk of a potential breakdown of their professional boundaries they must immediately bring it to the attention of the manager.
- 4.2 If employees feel a colleague is at risk of potential breakdown of professional boundaries they have a duty to protect both service user and worker and should inform their manager of the concerns.
- 4.3 Employees/workers must alert their manager if they have personal knowledge of a service user who comes under their care, as either the service user or the employee may need to be temporarily moved.
- 4.4 If an employee/worker is aware, or becomes aware, that they are related or are known to the service user this should be brought to the immediate attention of the manager, regardless of whether they are responsible for their care.

## 5 UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICES/BEHAVIOUR

- 5.1 **Sexual Contact;**
  - 5.1.1 Sexual acts
  - 5.1.2 Requests for/suggestion of sexual acts
  - 5.1.3 Physical contact which could be construed as sexually suggestive.
  - 5.1.4 Flirtation, sexual innuendo and/or insinuation.
  - 5.1.5 Discussion of sexual matters outside of a therapeutic requirement.
- 5.2 Some examples of more subtle inappropriate behaviour may include the following:
  - 5.2.1 Inappropriate dress.
  - 5.2.2 Inappropriate use of body or verbal language i.e. language which is used to satisfy the need of the worker concerned and is not likely to have any therapeutic benefits for the service user.

5.2.3 Asking the service user inappropriate questions regarding their sexual habits.

### 5.3 **Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality**

5.3.1 Employees/workers must not accept personal gifts, favours or hospitality from current or ex-service users of KMPT. This may be interpreted as being given by the service user in return for preferential treatment, under a sense of obligation, or them having been coerced by the employee. Where it is difficult to refuse a gift, then employees must discuss this with their manager and act in line with the Managing Conflicts Policy.

### 5.4 **Giving of Gifts to Service Users**

5.4.1 Under no circumstances should employees/workers give a gift of any kind, whether or not this is money or any other type of gift, to a current or ex-service user of KMPT.

5.5 **Inappropriate Personal Disclosure** - At times it may be appropriate to disclose some personal information as part of the therapeutic relationship. Inappropriate personal disclosure might include:

5.5.1 Personal information such as debt/personal relationships.

5.5.2 Discussion about other employees or service users

5.5.3 Information relating to their own personal health

5.6 **Provision of substances to service users which are not prescribed** - All medication must be administered in accordance with the Policies for the Control and Administration of Medicines.

### 5.7 **Misuse of Money/Property**

5.7.1 Employees must adhere to the Policy for handling of service users' money and property.

5.7.2 Employees should refrain from loaning their personal property to service users as this can be deemed as favouritism towards service users and therefore conflict with personal boundaries, trust and dependency issues and could also be discriminating against other service users.

5.8 **Misuse of Service Users Facilities and Property** - Employees must not use service users' facilities or property for their own use. Examples of these are as follows:

- Washing machines/ironing boards/dryers etc.
- Cooking facilities.
- Television/videos (except for education and information purposes and where it is part of the care plan).
- Eating service users' personal food.

5.9 **Discrimination** - This can take the form of subjective comments, which can be either written or verbal about service users:

5.9.1 Culture or race

5.9.2 Gender

5.9.3 Sexual orientation

5.9.4 Age

5.9.5 Physical characteristics, not necessarily disability i.e. large nose etc

5.9.6 Disability

5.9.7 Religious belief

5.9.8 Any other personal aspects

5.10 **Treatment and Other Forms of Care** - It is not acceptable for the worker to carry out treatment or give other care when:

5.10.1 It is not part of the service users care plan

5.10.2 The worker is not qualified to do so

5.10.3 When it has not been agreed with the team.

5.10.4 Some examples of these are as follows:

- Taking images, audio or visual recordings without the permission of the service user.
- Hair cuts
- Massage
- Alternative therapies
- Religious rituals
- Providing pay/or benefits in kind to the service user in exchange for jobs/work/chores

5.11 **Abuse of Power/Creating Dependence** - Employees have a responsibility to discourage over-reliance of the service user on one worker and to encourage and enable the service user towards independence. Some examples of abuse of power and the potential for creating dependence are as follows:

5.11.1 Providing the service user with their private contact details i.e. phone numbers, social media etc.

5.11.2 Inviting service users to the worker's home

5.11.3 Socialising outside the therapeutic relationship

5.11.4 Encouraging the service user to rely on one worker

5.11.5 Using the service user for the worker's emotional needs

5.12 **Supervision** - Employees must actively seek regular supervision which is used constructively in the area of disclosing any feeling that they may be developing for the service user. These disclosures will be kept confidential unless the situation remains unresolved and the relationship develops into a personal one, in which case the supervisor will be responsible for seeking further advice on this. If the employee feels that their relationship with the service user has moved away from a therapeutic relationship they should immediately seek support from their manager to discuss the matter and an appropriate plan of action put in place.

5.13 **Service User Involvement** – Employees/workers are expected to explain the relationship between them and the service user in a sensitive manner and where appropriate form a contract of care with the service user.

## 6 MANAGERS

- 6.1 **Service User Information** - Managers must ensure that the service users have access to up to date information about services.
- 6.2 **Adult Protection / Child Protection** - If it is decided that a vulnerable adult's or a service user's child may be at risk in any way, then an adult protection or protection of children alert must be raised as per safeguarding policy and practice.

## **7 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 The Equality Act 2010 places a statutory duty on public bodies to have due regard in the exercise of their functions. The duty also requires public bodies to consider how the decisions they make, and the services they deliver, affect people who share equality protected characteristics and those who do not. In KMPT the culture of Equality Impact Assessment will be pursued in order to provide assurance that the Trust has carefully considered any potential negative outcomes that can occur before implementation. The Trust will monitor the implementation of the various functions/policies and refresh them in a timely manner in order to incorporate any positive changes.

## **8 HUMAN RIGHTS**

- 8.1 The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out fundamental provisions with respect to the protection of individual human rights. These include maintaining dignity, ensuring confidentiality and protecting individuals from abuse of various kinds. Employees and volunteers of the Trust must ensure that the trust does not breach the human rights of any individual the trust comes into contact with.