



Professional & Personal Boundaries

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INTRODUCTION

Staff, placement students and volunteers working within The Make a Difference Trust have a responsibility to provide safe, effective and caring services to our audience and stakeholders within their care.

Whilst it is recognised that staff and volunteers must establish a rapport with our audience and stakeholders they are, responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries between themselves and our audience and stakeholders at all times.

The rights and needs of our audience and stakeholders should be respected at all times. However, by the very nature of the illness/disability of the our some of our audience and stakeholders at The Make a Difference Trust the relationship between the service user and worker is sometimes not one of equal balance.

Staff, placement students and volunteers must recognise and understand that they are in a position of power. This power must not be abused at any time. It is essential therefore, that all interactions between our audience and stakeholders and staff/volunteers must be seen in terms of a professional relationship. Staff and volunteers will be given a clear framework/role description within which to carry out interactions with our audience and stakeholders. Because there is a potential for positions of power to be abused and professional boundaries broken, The Make a Difference Trust makes it clear that the responsibility to maintain such boundaries rests with individual staff. Failure to meet this responsibility may lead to formal disciplinary action being taken against them.

Staff and volunteers must ensure that working relationships are not misread or confused with friendship or other personal relationships. This is essential in order to protect our audience and stakeholders at a time when they may be vulnerable. It is also to protect staff and volunteers from any risk of potential false allegations.

If a member of staff is in any doubt, they should seek advice from their manager, another manager at The Make a Difference Trust or the CEO.

SCOPE

This policy is written for all staff and volunteers in relation to their work with our audience and stakeholders who are currently receiving care, support advice or information from The Make a Difference Trust or who had had services from The Make a Difference Trust in the past. This applies to all staff and volunteers equally irrespective of role or pay level. The policy covers all areas of the services provided by The Make a Difference Trust.

RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of all line managers to ensure their staff and volunteers have a full understanding of this policy and that the policy requirements are adhered to by them and their staff at all times.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the division between the professional and personal relationships between our audience and stakeholders and staff/volunteers therefore enabling consistent approaches to our audience and stakeholders.

REQUIREMENTS

Immediately a member of staff or volunteer thinks that there is a risk of a potential breakdown of his/her professional boundaries, he/she must bring it to the attention of the line manager.

If staff/volunteers feel a colleague is at risk of potential breakdown of professional boundaries then they too have a duty to protect both the service user and staff/volunteers, and should bring the matter to a manager.

Staff must alert their line manager if they have a personal knowledge of a service user who comes under their care.

If an employee is aware or becomes aware that he/she is related to a service user then this should be brought to the immediate attention of their line manager.

DEFINITIONS

Professional Relationships

A professional relationship is a relationship between our stakeholders and the employee/volunteer in whom the latter has a responsibility for ensuring that objectivity is achieved at all times, (In and out of work).

Boundary

When the 'line' between the professional and personal relationship is crossed and the relationship between the service user and the employee/volunteer moves from being objective to subjective. An indication of this is found in unacceptable practices below.

Service User

A current service user for whom the member of staff/volunteer is directly involved in providing advocacy, advice, information, care and support.

The service user who has previously had advocacy, advice, information, care and support from an employee or volunteer at THE MAKE A DIFFERENCE TRUST.

A current service user who has had no direct professional relationship with an employee.

UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICES

Unacceptable practices are those which put the professional/personal relationship in danger of crossing the professional 'boundary'. It is not acceptable for employees of THE MAKE A DIFFERENCE TRUST or volunteers to form personal relationships with our audience and stakeholders. Breach of this policy will result in disciplinary action being taken. Where a breach has occurred, employees or volunteers will immediately be dismissed due to frustration of contract and gross misconduct. Examples of inappropriate behaviour are listed below but the list is not intended to be exhaustive and, if staff are in any doubt, they should consult with their manager.

Sexual Contact

- Sexual acts
- Requests for/suggestion of sexual acts
- Physical contact which could be construed as sexually suggestive sexual innuendo and/or insinuation.

Cultural, political or specific inappropriate behaviour

This may include the following:

- Inappropriate discussion of political or cultural matters
- Failure to be sensitive to cultural dress or cultural background
- Asking the service user inappropriate questions or sensitive matters not related to the situation or our roles with them.

- Inappropriate touching of a service user.

All of the above may depend on our roles, who we are working with and their values, religion or culture, where we are, what occasion we are taking part in, if we are in another's building.

Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality

Staff, placement students and volunteers must not accept any personal gift(s) or hospitality from our audience and stakeholders which could be interpreted as being given by the service user in return for preferential treatment. Where it is difficult to refuse a gift or a gift is valued at more than £5.00, then the employee must discuss this with their line manager immediately.

Inappropriate Personal Disclosure

Staff, placement students and volunteers must not divulge any inappropriate personal information about themselves or other staff members.

Concealing Information from Colleagues about our stakeholders

This might include:

- Personal information
- Letting our audience and stakeholders know where they or other staff members live.
- The intention of the service user to self-harm or harm others
- Not reporting violent or critical incident/issues
- Not reporting child protection/ vulnerable adult protection issues
- Not completing full records of service user's interactions. – NB: reporting our work is an important part of maintaining our professional boundaries and provides evidence of our management of these. Reporting includes record keeping, on a data base and paper, and talking to a line manager.
- Falsifying records

Misuse of Money/Property

Staff, placement students and volunteers must not accept any moneys, or gifts valued at more than £5.00 from our audience and stakeholders.

If our audience and stakeholders wish to donate to The Make a Difference Trust they can send a cheque made payable to "The Make a Difference Trust" and the money will be allocated to the fund most in need at the time of donation.

Staff, placement students and volunteers must get their manager's permission before loaning their personal property.

Misuse of Service User's Facilities and Property

Staff must not use service user's property for their own use.

Examples are as follows:

- Borrowing service user's telephone, camera or other equipment (except for education and information purposes and where it is part of the care plan)
- Taking and eating Service User's food. Without invitation and recording this fact.

Discrimination

This can take the form of subjective comments which can be either written or verbal in relation to a service user, in relation to culture or race, gender, sexual orientation or preference, age, physical characteristics or any other personal aspects. (refer to The Make a Difference Trust Equality Policy)

Treatment and other forms of Care

It is not acceptable for a member of staff or volunteer to carry out treatment or give other care when:

- it is not part of the service user's individual support plan
- the employee/volunteer is not qualified to provide this element of care or
- it has not been discussed with the team

Some examples of these are as follows:

- Taking photographs without the service user's signed permission and THE MAKE A DIFFERENCE TRUST's agreement
- alternative therapies/ counselling

Abuse of Power/ Favouritism

Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to discourage favouritism or unhealthy over reliance of the service user on one employee/volunteer to the exclusion of others. Some examples of abuse of power and the potential for favouritism or an unhealthy dependence are as follow:

- inviting service user to the worker's/volunteer's home
- socialising outside the professional role boundary relationship
- encouraging our audience and stakeholders to rely on one employee without this being part of the team plan.
- using the service user for the employee's/volunteers own emotional needs
- drinking or drug taking with the service user
- aiding and abetting illegal or criminal activities
- sharing in pornographic materials or websites
- social networking and sharing of personal information via these sites with our audience and stakeholders.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF AND MANAGERS

Managers

Training and Updating

Managers are responsible for facilitating regular training and updating.

Service User Information

Managers will ensure that that our audience and stakeholders have access to up to date information about services and our mission and charitable aims.

Cultural Differences

Staff should be aware of service user's cultural differences and give due respect and dignity.

Staff/volunteers

Supervision and support

Staff and have monthly supervision, which is used constructively in discussing and maintaining professional boundaries. Pre-existing relationships between our audience and stakeholders and staff and volunteers must be disclosed and new relationships that breach the professional boundaries must not develop. Any change in role or relationship by staff/volunteer with individual our audience and stakeholders must be notified to managers who will take appropriate action to ensure professional boundaries are maintained at all times. It is not acceptable to staff and volunteers to develop relationships with our audience and stakeholders of The Make a Difference Trust under any circumstances.

Training and Updating

All employees and volunteers have the responsibility to ensure that they have knowledge of and understanding of the importance of keeping professional boundaries.

Service User Information

Employees and volunteers are expected to explain the relationship between them and the service user in a professional and sensitive manner. They must explain that it is not acceptable for staff and volunteers to develop relationships with our stakeholders in any circumstances and that pre-existing relationships must be disclosed.

Reporting

All work should be reported appropriately using databases and paper records. Staff must ensure our audience and stakeholders should sign off one to one support with start and finish times on paperwork issue by The Make a Difference Trust.

Where appropriate to the staff/ volunteer they will be responsible for writing and reviewing an Individual Support Plan (ISP) with the service user.

MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The policy will be monitored via:

- The range of policies and standards which are referred to in this document
- The complaints procedure and the disciplinary procedure

Document Control	
Approved by:	
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