



children's hospice

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SOUTH WEST

MAKING THE MOST OF SHORT AND PRECIOUS LIVES ACROSS THE SOUTH WEST



# DRAWING THE LINE

Maintaining professional boundaries,  
whilst supporting families and developing  
relationships.

# Continuum of professional behaviour

Under  
involved

Zone of  
Helpfulness

Over  
involved

# Continuum of professional behaviour

- Zone of helpfulness in the centre - interactions are effective and safe
- Under involvement to the left – includes distancing; disinterest and neglect.
- Over involvement to the right – ranging from boundary crossings to boundary violations.
- No definite lines separating zones – gradual melding, which leads to ‘grey areas’.

# CROSSING THE LINE

- Boundary crossing – ‘grey area’ around professional boundaries which require good judgement and careful consideration of context, may be appropriate in specific circumstances.
- Boundary violation – unacceptable behaviour that clearly violates professional standards: verbal, physical, sexual, emotional, financial abuse or neglect or remarks/behaviours which are insulting, seductive, or humiliating.

# Establishing clear professional boundaries.

- Responsibility of professional to establish/maintain boundaries
- Explain role in child/family's care at start
- Use child's preferred name
- Plan care around child's needs/wishes
- Respect confidentiality and seek consent
- Be aware of own behaviour and communication and reflect on interactions with children/families

# YELLOW LIGHTS

## Boundary Warning signs 1

- Frequently thinking of the child/family member when away from work
- Frequently planning the care of other children/families around the needs of one child/family
- Spending free time with the child/family and/or giving out own phone number or e mail to child/family
- Sharing personal information or work concerns with the child/family
- Feeling responsible if the child/family's progress is limited – adopting the 'rescuer role'.

# YELLOW LIGHTS

## Boundary Warning signs 2

- Noticing more physical touching than is appropriate or sexual content in interaction with child/family member
- Favouring one child's care at the expense of another or giving special attention which differs from that given to other children/family members.
- Swapping child allocation
- Being defensive or making excuses when questioned regarding interactions/relationship with the child/family member



# YELLOW LIGHTS

## Boundary Warning signs 3

- Changing dress style for work when working with the child/family member
- Receiving of gifts or continued contact/communication with the child/family member after discharge from service
- Acting and/or feeling possessive about the child/family member
- Denying that you have crossed the boundary from a professional to non professional relationship.

# Think you crossed a boundary?

## ASK YOURSELF 1

- Would I feel comfortable discussing this activity/behaviour with a manager?
- Would I feel uncomfortable if a colleague/manager observed my actions/behaviour?
- Could my actions be misunderstood?
- Will my actions change the family/child's expectation for care?

# Think you crossed a boundary?

## ASK YOURSELF 2

- Is my relationship entirely focused on the needs/well being of the child/family member?
- Are my personal needs being met through this contact with the child/family member?
- Is my relationship with the child/family member adversely affecting my professional judgement?

# A boundary has been crossed – Now what?

- Discuss your concerns with a manager
- Document any boundary blurring, with rationale for course of action taken.
- Record the actions taken to re-establish professional boundaries.
- Report your own or other's boundary violations to a manager immediately – this will require CHSW Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

# KEY POINTS

- Set the stage – establish appropriate boundaries from the start
- Be alert – correct ‘yellow light’ warning signs immediately.
- Take responsibility for re-establishing boundaries – regardless of who crossed the line.
- Be open and transparent – document and discuss with manager