

PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES POLICY

Purpose and scope

This policy applies to staff contact with children, young people and their families and exists to safeguard the interests of children, young people, their families and staff.

All staff have a responsibility to apply and maintain professional boundaries with children, young people and their families and this is explained as part of the induction programme.

Managers are responsible for monitoring practice on professional boundaries and challenging staff where standards are not being upheld, including taking disciplinary action if appropriate.

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

Policy guidelines

Relationships and contact within work

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

Staff should be careful not to influence children, young people and their families with their own beliefs or personal values. Staff should be aware of their own potential to influence vulnerable children, young people and/or their families and not promote their own religious or political beliefs upon children, young people and/or their families.

Staff should respect the right to privacy of a child, young person and their family and not discuss one child, young person and their family's details with another child, young person and family. Staff should never enter into gossip or hearsay with a child, young person or their family.

Staff should understand the difference between befriending (a professional relationship made to meet the child's, young person's and their family's needs) and becoming a friend (a non professional relationship which meets the needs of both people).

The relationship between a staff member and a child, young person or a member of their family is not an equal one. On no account, should staff enter into a sexual relationship with a child, young person or a member of their family.

When staff offer advice to children, young people and/or their family, they should provide them with sufficient information to make informed choices. Staff should also be aware of where they do not have the knowledge/experience to give advice and refer the child, young person and/or their family to the appropriate agency.

Staff should be aware of the need to empower children, young people and their families and therefore not “do everything for them” but encourage and enable them to achieve outcomes themselves.

Staff should be realistic and honest about the services they provide to children, young people and/or their families and not give them false hope or make false promises.

Where staff know a child, young person or their family prior to them accessing the service, this must be made known to their manager.

Staff should treat children, young people and their families with dignity, respect and in a non-judgmental manner.

Staff should never apply favouritism to any children, young people or their families.

Contact outside of the workplace

Staff should never give out their personal contact details to children, young people or to members of their family.

Staff should not allow children, young people or members of their family to visit their homes.

Staff must not encourage children, young people or members of their family to develop relationships with the staff member’s relatives or friends.

Staff who encounter children, young people and their families in a social situation outside of work should be pleasant and polite if approached by children, young people or their families but should not encourage any prolonged social contact. Staff should not approach children, young people or their families in any social situation other than to say hello.

Staff should not give out their personal mobile number to children, young people or their families. Staff should not use their home or mobile phone to ring children, young people or their families, except in an emergency and in such circumstances the staff member should dial 141 followed by the number, in order to preserve the confidentiality of their telephone number.

Staff should not give out their own personal email address to children, young people or members of their family. All electronic communication should be through Martin House computer email system, and staff should only give children, young people and their families the Martin House email address allocated to them.

Social Networking Sites

Please see equivalent section in General Notices section.

Financial

Staff should not enter into any financial transactions with children, young people or members of their family, including buying, selling, exchanging or bartering goods and services. This also includes children, young people or members of their family entering into financial transactions with the relatives or friends of staff.

Staff should never become Power of Attorney, trustees, executors or beneficiaries of children's or young people's wills, or for members of their families.

Staff should not lend their personal money or possessions to children, young people or their families.

Staff should not borrow money or possessions from children, young people or their family members.

Staff should not accept any offers of labour from children, young people or their families for their own benefit.

Staff should not accept gifts from children, young people or their families under normal circumstances.

However, where a child, young person and/or their family would be upset or insulted if a gift was refused by a member of staff, or if cultural norms were being broken, the receiving of that gift should be recorded.

Gifts may be accepted under the circumstances when giving of the gift is done not out of duty, but as heart led thanksgiving, or appreciation.

Children, young people and their families should be told when they enter into the service that it is generally against the rules and good practice guidelines of the organisation for staff to receive gifts from children, young people.

Use of cars

Staff should not give children, young people and/or their family lifts in their personal cars.

Where it has been defined as acceptable by the organisation for a child, young person to be given lifts by staff e.g. so that the staff member can attend a meeting with and on behalf of the child, young person or their family, the appropriate car insurance must be obtained. Normal social, domestic and pleasure car insurance does not cover children, young people and their families and if there were any accidents, the staff member may be personally liable for damages.

Where staff have to attend a meeting with/on behalf of a child, young person or their family, they must strive to use a Martin House car if at all possible.

Physical contact

Please see Intimate Care Guidelines in the Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Policy.