



Professional Boundaries – Volunteers Policy

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Professional Boundaries – Volunteers Policy

The Purpose of the document

Shooting Star Chase is committed to providing high quality professional care to the children and families supported and as such we strive to adhere to good standards of practice. One of these standards includes the establishment and maintenance of professional boundaries in the relationships of all volunteers who come into contact, with family members. Given the nature of our work these professional boundaries can seem difficult to clarify and the purpose of this policy is to assist volunteers in the development of good practice.

As an organisation that strives to offer holistic care we recognise that in our work with families we will see many varied needs being expressed by various family members. It can be easy to be pulled into a “friendship” rather than a professional relationship with people who are experiencing distress in their life. Family members may see us as people with whom they are sharing very personal information which may give rise to them asking us very personal questions. The maintaining of appropriate professional boundaries with families means that all staff and volunteers need to be able to question their own responses to these questions.

To whom the document relates

This policy applies to all volunteers at Shooting Star Chase. (There is a separate policy relating to staff members).

Definition

Boundaries define the limits of behaviours, which allow a professional carer and service user to engage safely in a supportive caring relationship. These boundaries are based upon trust, respect and the appropriate use of power.

Professional boundaries – questions to ask ourselves

It may help us to recognise when we may be in danger of crossing a professional boundary by asking ourselves a series of questions:

- Is what is being asked/assumed by the family within my role description at Shooting Star Chase?
- Is the request in accordance with all relevant Shooting Star Chase policies?
- Could or would other staff or volunteers at Shooting Star Chase do this for a family?
- Is this something which could be offered/provided by another member of SSC staff or appropriate volunteer or an external professional
- If I carry out this request what could the implications be for other volunteers or staff members?
- What is the affect on my work/home life balance?
- Is my action that of a professional or a friend?
- Is my action something that I would do for any family using the service or just this family?

- Am I making unrealistic promises to this family?
- Are there any health and safety implications, for me or the family?
- What is the impact of this on my own health and well being?

If any volunteer has difficulty in answering any of these questions in relation to any aspect of their work they must discuss the issue with their line manager or volunteer development team at the earliest opportunity. If a volunteer believes another volunteer is at risk of potential breakdown of professional boundaries, they have a duty towards organisation to bring the matter to the attention of the line manager or volunteer development as soon as possible.

Behaviours of concern in relation to professional boundaries

Volunteers must note that the behaviours listed are not meant to be exhaustive but are listed as examples. Where there is any doubt the volunteer must seek advice from their line manager or the volunteer development team.

For the purpose of this policy the behaviours have been broken down into 3 categories:-

1. Prohibited on all occasions
2. At line managers discretion and recorded
3. At volunteers own discretion

Prohibited on all occasions

- Sexual activities or sexual contact with any family member.
- Sexual innuendo and/or insinuation.
- Discriminatory language or act.
- Inappropriate dress (need to be respectful of cultural differences of the families supported).
- Rough handling when not part of the agreed care plan.
- Receiving money for volunteers own purpose.
- Social meeting in a restaurant/pub or any other venue outside of the hospice or family home
- Social meeting in a family home Inviting any family member to your own home/or giving them your personal details e.g. address contact telephone numbers or anything of a personal nature
- Meeting outside work hours (unless this is part of a written and agreed care plan).
- Being friends on social media or posting information identifying a supported family.
- Saying you love a family member (exception with children the use of the word love needs to be seen in context of their level of understanding).
- Kiss on the cheek (exception where this is instigated by a family member as part of their cultural norm).

- Accepting a volunteering role with a family to whom you are related, have had a business relationship, or a family whom you have known socially, taught or supervised. (Exception a family whom you have known socially at your manager's discretion and following a discussion with the family about the possible consequences).
- Swearing.
- Drinking alcohol, taking non prescribed drugs and smoking.
- Disclosing personal information about yourself and your private life to family members.
- Disclosing your own political or religious views.
- Disclosing information about your own health issues or treatments unless to protect the child/ family such as presence of infectious disease.
- Using your professional power inappropriately (All volunteers should be aware of the imbalance of power in any relationship involving volunteers and client. The power imbalance can be used for personal advantage).
- Concealing information from your line manager and/or volunteer development colleagues about service users. This could include personal information, non reporting of violent or critical incidents in a family or issues around the safeguarding of children or adults at risk.
- Lending or borrowing money to/from a family.
- Paying for goods/treats personally.
- Attending birthday parties and other social events. (Unless supporting a family's attendance at such a function and in consultation with your line manager).
- All contact with family members whilst absent from work due to sickness, holiday, maternity leave or time off in lieu.
- All Contact with families after volunteering with Shooting Star Chase ends–
- Making personal use of a family's property e.g. telephone, cooking facilities.
- Involving the family in a gambling syndicate.
- Selling or receiving goods or services to/from the family including recommending services (e.g. builders etc.).
- Selling or disposing of goods belonging to the family (with the exception of goods donated by families to the Shooting Star Chase charity shops).
- Incurring a liability on behalf of a family.
- Taking responsibility for looking after valuable items for a family
- Acting as a witness to or being executor of wills or being involved in any way with other legal documentation.

At line managers' discretion and recorded

- Receiving funds that comply with the Shooting Star Chase cash handling and expenses policies.
- Receiving a gift or hospitality for your team/self.

At volunteers own discretion

- Hugging – should only be at the family member's instigation.
- Shaking hands – should only be at the family member's instigation.
- Saying you like a family member – consideration needs to be made about the appropriateness of such a comment e.g. appropriate in a conversation with a child.
- Hand on hand/shoulder/arm – consideration that this action may not be received well by the family member.
- Acceptance of light refreshments during a visit.

Non-compliance

Failure to adhere to this policy is likely to result in disciplinary action being taken.

RATIFIED BY:

DATE: