



Public – To be published on the Trust external website

Staff Relatives and Close Family Friends

HR-0025-v3.1

Status: Approved

Document type: Procedure

Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Purpose.....	3
3	Who this procedure applies to.....	4
3.1	Roles and responsibilities	4
4	Related documents	4
5	Procedure –	5
5.1	Working in the same team, location or department	5
5.2	Line Management Issues	6
5.3	Staff Concerns	6
5.4	Recruitment	6
6	Definitions.....	6
7	How this procedure will be implemented.....	7
7.1	Training needs analysis	7
8	How the implementation of this procedure will be monitored	7
9	References.....	8
10	Document control (external)	8
Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment Screening Form.....		10
Appendix 2 – Approval checklist.....		13
Appendix 3 – Declaration Form		15

1 Introduction

This document sets out the Trust procedure for the management of the potential conflict of interest that may arise when involved in applying for a role and/or working alongside a relative or close friend within the Trust.

This procedure is critical to the delivery of our Journey to Change and our ambition to co-create safe and personalised care that improves the lives of people with mental health needs, a learning disability or autism. It helps us deliver our three strategic goals as follows:

This procedure supports the trust to co-create a great experience for all patients, carers and families from its diverse population by providing an assurance we are committed to providing high standards of care and in doing so we will:

- ensure that all staff are treated in a fair and equitable way in accordance with employment legislation and that all staff treat each other in accordance with the Trust Values
- avoid situations where staff feel unable to raise concerns due to family/close personal relationships within a department or team

2 Purpose

Following this procedure will help the Trust to:

- avoid situations where staff feel unable to raise concerns due to family/close personal relationships within the department or team.
- avoid situations where two people who have a close family/personal relationship are in a line management arrangement.
- minimize the possibility of allegations of favouritism, unfair treatment etc, especially where a line management relationship also exists.
- provide a range of options for managers to consider when staff declare a relationship.
- ensure that all staff are treated in a fair and equitable way in accordance with employment legislation and that all staff treat each other in accordance with the Trust Values.
- Ensure that staff feel comfortable in challenging individuals who are not living the Trust values, and are aware of mechanisms in place to raise their concerns and receive appropriate support in doing so.

3 Who this procedure applies to

- This procedure applies to all Trust employees and prospective employees applying for posts within the Trust.

3.1 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To declare within the recruitment process and to their line manager any close personal relationship/friendship with another employee of the Trust. This is an ongoing requirement throughout an individual's employment should a relationship develop whilst at work. • To acknowledge that being in a close personal relationship/friendship with another employee may be a cause for concern for colleagues.
Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To record any declaration and assess the potential impact within the team/department. • To address any concerns caused by a close personal relationship/friendship in line with this procedure
Staff Side representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To advise employees in accordance with this procedure
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To advise managers and employees in accordance with this procedure.

4 Related documents

This procedure also refers to:

- [Recruitment and Selection Procedure](#)
- [Bullying and Harassment Reporting Resolution Procedure](#)
- [Managing Concerns of Potential Conduct \(Disciplinary\) Procedure](#) and [Guidance](#)
- [Freedom to Speak Up Policy \(Whistleblowing\)](#)
- [Trust OJTC](#)
- [Trust Values](#)

5 Procedure –



If you are closely related to another employee or have a close personal relationship with another employee who you directly/regularly work with you must **make sure that your manager knows**. If the person you are related to or that you have a close personal relationship with is your manager then you need to approach their manager. Your manager will assess the situation and consult with you about any arrangements which may need to be put in place



Friendships quite naturally are formed in the workplace. Employees are expected to exercise judgement in determining whether or not a friendship has developed to such an extent that it can be described as a close personal relationship. Staff should work with their managers to ensure personal relationships between staff do not compromise their work or lead others to believe that they might.

5.1 Working in the same team, location or department

Your manager will discuss with you the potential problems which may arise, e.g.

- arranging shifts/annual leave to accommodate both people;
- embarrassment or awkwardness for colleagues;
- perceived loyalty to each other may compromise the reporting/investigating of incidents when both parties are involved;
- performance may be affected not only of yourselves but also other staff in the team.

If the situation becomes problematic, as a result of these discussions, one of you may be asked to move to another team or special arrangements may be put in place such as ensuring that you do not work on the same shift or in the same office; and/or having a means for other employees to raise concerns about the effect your relationship is having.

Where there are serious concerns raised about you working together and the effect this is having on your performance or on others in the team then managers will discuss this with you and one or both of you may be permanently redeployed.

5.2 Line Management Issues

The professional relationships between some staff are so important that they should not be compromised at all by the existence of a close personal relationship. As such, the Trust will take steps to ensure that staff in close personal relationships/friendships are not directly or indirectly line managed by the other person. When such a relationship is declared discussions will take place with both employees and one of you will be redeployed if satisfactory arrangements cannot be put in place. If redeployment is appropriate then until such time as a post becomes vacant another appropriate manager will undertake the authorisation of travel claims, pay, timesheets, appraisals etc. Making a declaration will not put your employment at risk.

5.3 Staff Concerns

Where an employee feels that a colleague's family member or close personal relationship is adversely affecting their employment, the functioning of the team or the provision of services, they are encouraged to share their concerns at the earliest opportunity. This also applies to employees who have a family or close personal relationship who feel they are being disadvantaged because of the relationship.

Concerns should be raised with their line manager, or more senior manager if they prefer. Where an employee is not comfortable with either of these options, they may consider raising their concerns with a Dignity at Work Champion, HR representative, Employee Support Officer or Staff Side representative, or Freedom to Speak up Guardian (please refer to the Bullying and Harassment Reporting and Resolution Procedure).

5.4 Recruitment

If you are the recruiting manager or an interview panel member and a close relative or friend applies for the post then you must declare an interest and withdraw from the process. It is your responsibility to discuss with your friend or relative the implications of this procedure and you must make your manager aware of the application.

If you are an employee and you are aware that a close relative or friend may be applying for a post it is your responsibility to make them aware of this procedure. You must also make your manager aware of the application.

6 Definitions

Term	Definition
Close personal relationship	A close or familiar relationship (e.g., husband/wife/spouse, civil partnership, cohabitation, partner or someone you are in a relationship with)

Relatives	Family relationship/individuals who are related (children, siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins etc. including in-laws and step relatives)
Close Personal Friendship	Someone you know personally and meet and/or socialise with outside of work
Dignity at Work Champions	Dignity at Work Champions are employee volunteers who have been trained to support staff experiencing conflict at work which may be linked to bullying and/or harassment. Dignity at Work Champions are available to provide confidential advice or to help facilitate a resolution conversation. Note - Please email the HR Operations team, TEAWVNT.HROperations@nhs.net , for additional information on the role of the Dignity at Work Champions

7 How this procedure will be implemented

- This procedure will be published on the Trust intranet and external website. Awareness of the updated procedure will be included in the Trust internal bulletin.
- Line managers will disseminate this procedure to all Trust employees through a line management briefing.

7.1 Training needs analysis

Staff/Professional Group	Type of Training	Duration	Frequency of Training
No training needs identified			

8 How the implementation of this procedure will be monitored

Number	Auditable Standard/Key Performance Indicators	Frequency/Method/Person Responsible	Where results and any Associate Action Plan will be reported to, implemented and monitored; (this will usually be via the relevant Governance Group).
1	Number of grievances relating	Frequency = monthly	Monthly Case Management Meeting

	to Staff Relatives and close family friends concerns raised	Method = Case Management Tracker Responsible = people partners	
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9 References

Equality Act (2010)

10 Document control (external)

To be recorded on the policy register by Policy Coordinator

Required information type	Information
Date of approval	12 March 2024
Next review date	12 March 2027
This document replaces	HR-0025-v3 Staff Relatives and Close Family Friends
This document was approved by	PWG
This document was approved	23 February 2024
This document was approved by	JCC
This document was approved	12 March 2024
An equality analysis was completed on this policy on	09 February 2024
Document type	Public
FOI Clause (Private documents only)	n/a

Change record

Version	Date	Amendment details	Status
3	12 Mar 2024	Page 3 - Purpose and objectives added together	Approved

		<p>Page 3 - List of Trust Values removed</p> <p>Page 6 – added clarity to definition of close personal relationship to include: ‘partner or someone you are in a relationship with’</p> <p>Page 7 - During Employment Policy removed from Related Documents section</p> <p>Page 7 – Name of Recruitment and Selection Policy changed to Recruitment and Selection Procedure</p> <p>Page 7 – Name of Disciplinary Procedure changed to Managing Concerns of Potential Conduct (Disciplinary) Procedure</p> <p>Page 7 – Name of Whistleblowing Policy changed to Freedom to Speak Up Policy (Whistleblowing)</p>	
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Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment Screening Form

Please note: The [Equality Impact Assessment Policy](#) and [Equality Impact Assessment Guidance](#) can be found on the policy pages of the intranet

Section 1	Scope
Name of service area/directorate/department	People and Culture Directorate
Title	Staff Relatives and Close Family Friends Procedure
Type	Procedure
Geographical area covered	Trust wide
Aims and objectives	Provides guidance on the potential conflict of interest that may arise when involved in applying for a role and/or working alongside a relative or close friend
Start date of Equality Analysis Screening	01 November 2023
End date of Equality Analysis Screening	09 February 2024

Section 2	Impacts
<p>Who does the Policy, Procedure, Service, Function, Strategy, Code of practice, Guidance, Project or Business plan benefit?</p>	<p>The procedure aims to provide guidance to all employees of the Trust in relation to working alongside or closely with a relative or close friend. The procedure also covers prospective employees.</p>
<p>Will the Policy, Procedure, Service, Function, Strategy, Code of practice, Guidance, Project or Business plan impact negatively on any of the protected characteristic groups? Are there any Human Rights implications?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race (including Gypsy and Traveller) NO • Disability (includes physical, learning, mental health, sensory and medical disabilities) NO • Sex (Men and women) NO • Gender reassignment (Transgender and gender identity) NO • Sexual Orientation (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Heterosexual, Pansexual and Asexual etc.) NO • Age (includes, young people, older people – people of all ages) NO • Religion or Belief (includes faith groups, atheism and philosophical beliefs) NO • Pregnancy and Maternity (includes pregnancy, women / people who are breastfeeding, women / people accessing perinatal services, women / people on maternity leave) NO • Marriage and Civil Partnership (includes opposite and same sex couples who are married or civil partners) NO • Armed Forces (includes serving armed forces personnel, reservists, veterans and their families) NO • Human Rights Implications NO (Human Rights - easy read)
<p>Describe any negative impacts / Human Rights Implications</p>	
<p>Describe any positive impacts / Human Rights Implications</p>	<p>The aim of the procedure is to avoid situations where staff feel unable to raise concerns due to family/close relationships/close friendships within the department or team. Along with minimizing the possibility of allegations of favouritism, unfair treatment etc, especially where a line management relationship also exists.</p>

Section 3	Research and involvement
What sources of information have you considered? (e.g. legislation, codes of practice, best practice, nice guidelines, CQC reports or feedback etc.)	See references section
Have you engaged or consulted with service users, carers, staff and other stakeholders including people from the protected groups?	Yes
If you answered Yes above, describe the engagement and involvement that has taken place	The policy working group includes a select group of staff who are drawn from management and staff side representatives. The Joint Staff Consultative Committee is a formal committee who are responsible for signing off the agreement. These groups include and represent staff of all protected characteristics.
If you answered No above, describe future plans that you may have to engage and involve people from different groups	

Section 4	Training needs
As part of this equality impact assessment have any training needs/service needs been identified?	No
Describe any training needs for Trust staff	N/A
Describe any training needs for patients	N/A
Describe any training needs for contractors or other outside agencies	N/A

Check the information you have provided and ensure additional evidence can be provided if asked

Appendix 2 – Approval checklist

Title of document being reviewed:	Yes / No / Not applicable	Comments
1. Title	Yes	
Is the title clear and unambiguous?	Yes	
Is it clear whether the document is a guideline, policy, protocol or standard?	Yes	
2. Rationale		
Are reasons for development of the document stated?	Yes	
3. Development Process		
Are people involved in the development identified?	Yes	PWG and JCC
Has relevant expertise has been sought/used?	Yes	
Is there evidence of consultation with stakeholders and users?	Yes	PWG and JCC
Have any related documents or documents that are impacted by this change been identified and updated?	Not Applicable	
4. Content		
Is the objective of the document clear?	Yes	
Is the target population clear and unambiguous?	Yes	
Are the intended outcomes described?	Yes	
Are the statements clear and unambiguous?	Yes	
5. Evidence Base		
Is the type of evidence to support the document identified explicitly?	Yes	
Are key references cited?	Yes	
Are supporting documents referenced?	Yes	
6. Training		
Have training needs been considered?	Yes	

Are training needs included in the document?	Not Applicable	
7. Implementation and monitoring		
Does the document identify how it will be implemented and monitored?	Yes	
8. Equality analysis		
Has an equality analysis been completed for the document?	Yes	
Have Equality and Diversity reviewed and approved the equality analysis?	Yes	09 Feb 2024 LC
9. Approval		
Does the document identify which committee/group will approve it?	Yes	PWG and JCC
10. Publication		
Has the policy been reviewed for harm?	Yes	No harm
Does the document identify whether it is private or public?	Public	
If private, does the document identify which clause of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 applies?	Not Applicable	
11. Accessibility (See intranet accessibility page for more information)		
Have you run the Microsoft Word Accessibility Checker? (Under the review tab, 'check accessibility'. You must remove all errors)	Y	
Do all pictures and tables have meaningful alternative text?	Y	
Do all hyperlinks have a meaningful description? (do not use something generic like 'click here')	Y	

Appendix 3 – Declaration Form

Name:.....

Job Title:.....

Ward/Team:.....

Base:.....

Directorate:.....

Line Manager:.....

Details

Please provide details including the individual's name, place of work and relationship/friendship they have directly with you.

Please describe any actions implemented to mitigate risks.

Declaration

I declare that the information I have provided is accurate.

Employee Signature:

Date:.....