

Professional and Personal Relationships Policy



Purpose

The policy provides guidance for all staff when working with people who are customers (including stakeholders) of Eat That Frog C.I.C., to ensure that the boundaries between personal and professional behaviour are clearly understood and managed. The procedures provide guidance for staff regarding the standards expected in their relationships with customers of Eat That Frog C.I.C.

Applicability

The procedures apply to all staff (inclusive of volunteers) working at Eat That Frog whether they work directly with people or have contact with people from time to time. The policy covers the following relationships between:

- ✓ *Staff and customers of Eat That Frog*
- ✓ *Staff and staff*
- ✓ *Staff and external individuals / organisations (to include carers and family members)*

The policy applies when staff are 'on duty' and in certain circumstances when 'off duty' as described below

Roles and Responsibilities

Management

- The Directors have overall responsibility for reviewing the procedures within the published timescale
- Management are responsible for ensuring that the staff understand the procedures and that standards expected of staff are complied with
- They are also responsible for dealing with any breaches of the procedures under the relevant HR procedures (e.g. disciplinary)
- Treat any matters of potential conflict of interest in confidence
- Ensure all recruitment is carried out in a manner where no personal relationships can be used to influence the decision making either positively or negatively
- Ensuring all staff are familiar with the policies and procedures, and comply with them

Staff & Management

- Staff members should not have sexual relationships with customers of Eat That Frog.
- Staff must behave in a professional manner when 'on duty' and working with people even when this is in a social setting (e.g. events). 'On duty' is defined as carrying out the business of Eat That Frog.
- Staff should also behave in a professional manner when 'off duty' in certain circumstances

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- Staff must not consume alcohol, or take illegal substances when 'on duty' or present for work in an unfit state. Staff must not accept money as a gift or borrow money or possessions from people who are customers of Eat That Frog.
- Staff (or any member of their family) must not witness wills for people who are customers of Eat That Frog or knowingly be named as an Executor or Beneficiary of a will
- Staff must not sell things to, or buy things from customers of Eat That Frog
- Staff must not use credit/debit cards or Benefit cards belonging to customers; or have access to / use their 'PIN' numbers. Where a staff member becomes aware of a person PIN number or a confidential password they should notify the manager immediately so action can be taken to safeguard both the individual and the staff member.
- Staff must not accept responsibility for looking after any personal items on behalf of a person, except on a temporary basis e.g. when looking after a purse when on an outing.
- Staff must not accept free services from people who are customers of Eat That Frog or their families, where such services would normally be paid for. Any offer of service must be approved by a Director.
- Staff should not take their children or other family members to a customer's home
- Customers of Eat That Frog must not be taken with a staff member to their home or be allowed to enter a staff member's home unless a Director has authorised this
- Staff must not give out the mobile phone number of a colleague without their prior permission
- Staff must not swear, use abusive or discriminatory language, gestures or make jokes that cause offence to others when on duty

Maintaining Confidentiality

- Staff must not disclose information about people to other people who are customers / families / others (whether past or present users of services)
- Staff must not disclose information about people (e.g. needs, progress, personal information) to other people outside the service unless there is a requirement to do so.
- Where a member of staff is unsure whether they should disclose such information they should seek advice from their line manager
- As a general rule staff should not make themselves accessible to people when off duty and must not give out their own or other staff members' home phone number, personal mobile phone number or address.
- There may be occasions where it is appropriate to give people staff mobile phones where these have been issued by Eat That Frog for work use. The Service Manager will be responsible for monitoring the appropriateness
- All messages and requests for help, assistance or advice etc must go via the manager.
- If a person or carer telephones a member of staff at home, they should be referred to the manager.

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- If the matter is urgent, a member of staff may ring the staff member at home to relay the message and a decision regarding the way to respond will be agreed. If a staff member is concerned that confidential information is being breached they should report this to the manager as soon as possible.

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- **Maintaining Personal Professional Boundaries**

Staff should not generally work in their professional capacity for a relative or close friend e.g. where a person becomes a customer. If a potential person has been referred to Eat That Frog and a relative / friend is working the matter this should be discussed immediately with the Manager.

- Is the staff member a close / distant relative?
- Is the staff member providing a direct service or are they a manager?
- Does the staff member clearly understand the boundaries between personal and professional issues / behaviour?

Consideration should be given to the following when deciding what action to take:

- Could the staff member be re-deployed elsewhere to enable the person to receive the service (especially where there are no other options for the person)?
- Staff should excuse themselves from meetings when someone they know personally is to be discussed (e.g. team meetings)
- Information regarding a complaint, child protection or risk to a vulnerable adult should be shared with a supervisor; even when it has been gained in a personal capacity. The Complaints and Safeguarding procedures must be followed. Where such information also concerns an employee the Head of Service should be informed so that appropriate action can be agreed.

Staff must also be aware of the boundaries between personal and professional behaviour when they are 'off duty' (i.e. not in their normal work setting).

Examples are as follows:

- Staff must not discuss customers of Eat That Frog C.I.C. with relatives / carers when in a social setting
- Staff must not discuss customers between each other when in a social setting
- Staff should not discuss matters relating to their service in external settings (meetings / training etc) or with friends / relatives that breaches confidentiality or data protection
- Where staff need to discuss cases or scenarios as part of participative training then these should be 'anonymised' as far as possible; such that people / places etc cannot be easily identified
- Any information obtained in meetings / training etc re: customers of Eat That Frog / services must not be discussed outside of these events
- Staff should not meet customers socially outside of workplace events unless this has been discussed and agreed with their manager
- There should be no physical contact with customers of Eat That Frog
- Staff who are 'lone workers' should also take care to ensure that they do not place themselves in a position whereby they could inadvertently breach these procedures

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Guidance for staff who are related or in a relationship

In general terms staff who are related (e.g. by marriage, brother / sister etc), should not work together, however if they are deemed the best candidate for a role through a competitive process then we would expect staff to:

- Where one is more senior than the other, the senior will be supported to conduct supervision, appraisal or disciplinary by another senior manager
- Neither employee should exert influence over the other in relation to work issues.
- Either employee should report to the Manager where they feel that their ability to maintain personal / professional boundaries is being compromised by other work colleagues.

The Manager will monitor these relationships and should discuss any concerns with either employee in supervision and seek appropriate action to ensure that personal / professional boundaries are managed and maintained

Outside of Work Activities

On occasions, staff teams may go out socially in groups. All staff need to be aware that they are employees of Eat That Frog C.I.C. and should not bring the service or the reputation of Eat That Frog C.I.C. into disrepute at such times by inappropriate behaviour as this could lead to complaints from the public.

Staff should not provide information about Eat That Frog C.I.C. to others whom they form personal relationships with outside of work; or jeopardise the integrity or reputation of Eat That Frog C.I.C. through information they pass to another person.

Conflict of Interest

Where a member of staff belongs to a club, society, voluntary organisation etc their involvement can sometimes provide benefits to a service. This could include the provision of services, activities, collaborative working etc with that organisation.

It is recommended that any such activity is agreed in advance with a Director and any potential conflicts of interest or potential for blurring of personal / professional boundaries are identified and appropriate action agreed and recorded. This is particularly important where transactions in relation to property (e.g. lending of equipment) or finance are involved. In such cases it is advised that another member of staff manages these aspects.

All staff will be asked to sign a conflict of interest declaration at the start of their employment, staff are expected to highlight any conflict of interest that arises during their employment to a Director as soon as becomes apparent.

Disciplinary issues

Failure to follow these guidelines may result in staff being disciplined, based on the nature of the issues caused to Eat That Frog C.I.C. Depending upon the severity this can be considered as Gross Misconduct and result in dismissal.

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Date	Page	Details of the change	Agreed by
Dec 21	All	Reviewed – no change	Board Meeting
Dec 22		Reviewed – no change	Board
Dec 23		Reviewed – no change	Board