

Guidelines for Personal Relationships at Work

1 What this guidance covers

This guidance has been developed to minimise the potential risk of problems arising when people in personal relationships work together at SaTH. This guidance sets out the Trust's requirements regarding personal relationships at work and the steps to be followed.

It can be difficult to define what constitutes a personal relationship with a colleague. For the purposes of this guidance a "personal relationship" is defined as:-

- a close or familiar relationship (e.g. spouse, partner, cohabitation)
- individuals who are related (children, siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins etc including in-laws and step relatives)
- a business / commercial / financial relationship
- a romantic / sexual relationship
- a close personal friendship

2 Principles

The Trust recognises that employees who work together may form friendships and, in some cases, personal relationships. This guidance aims to strike a balance between your right to a private life and the Trust's right to protect its interests.

The Trust does not, as a general rule, wish to interfere with such friendships and relationships. However, it must also ensure that all employees continue to conduct themselves in an appropriate, professional and responsible manner while at work and that everyone continues to fulfil their duties diligently and effectively.

All discussions on this topic should remain strictly confidential.

3 Responsibilities

All **staff** must:

- inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity of any personal relationships they have with another employee, a supplier or contractor that exposes a potential conflict of interest or abuse of authority.
- not allow personal relationships to influence their conduct, behaviour or performance at work.

All **managers**, on becoming aware of potential conflicts through personal relationships, must:

- discuss the potential conflict with the employee
- assess the risks and possible implications of the relationship
- consider whether any special arrangements or changes are required to protect the individuals and the Trust (see below)
- make a record of the relationship on the employee's personal file

4 Guidance in practice

Recruitment

The relative or partner of any person applying for a job at the Trust must not be involved at any stage of the recruitment process.

Potential employees will be required to declare on their application form if they are related to any SaTH employee.

Relationships involving line managers

A line management relationship between those with personal relationships should be avoided where possible.

If a line management relationship already exists, alternative arrangements should be made in respect of authorising or processing any documentation relating to pay, expenses, annual leave/flexible working, salary or banding arrangements and contracts of employment.

The guidance in the section below (relationships with no line management) should also be considered and appropriate action taken to ensure the relationship has no detrimental effect on individuals or the Trust.

Relationships with no line management

This type of personal relationship at work does not of itself constitute a difficulty. However, employees are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at work.

Managers should consider:

- Are any employees likely to be made uncomfortable in their dealings with either employee because of the personal relationship?
- Is a personal relationship seen to offer an advantage or disadvantage to anyone involved?
- Is the relationship potentially interfering with performance?
- Is the relationship potentially having a negative effect on the workings of a team?

Where there is evidence that a personal relationship is having a detrimental effect the manager may wish to consider alternative arrangements in discussion with the relevant employee(s), e.g. a change in reporting arrangements, or duties within a team; one party being moved to another area of work or work location. Managers should seek further advice from the People Advisory Team if the need arises (sath.hradvice@nhs.net).

People and OD Directorate
February 2025