

Managing personal relationships at work

Scope and purpose of policy

We recognise that, from time to time, close personal relationships may develop between members of staff and/or customers/clients/suppliers etc.

Whilst the Company realises that employees have a right to a private life and therefore does not discourage relationships between employees, such relationships can be troublesome where employees are unable to draw an important distinction between private and professional life.

This policy outlines the Company's position on personal relationships between employees in order to ensure the Company's interests are maintained at all times, whilst at the same time balancing the interests of employees. The policy places certain expectations on employees and their managers to ensure that no blurring of judgement or conflict of interest arises.

It also seeks to protect the Company and any employees to avoid any allegations of improper workplace behaviour.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Company's policies on:

- disciplinary procedures
- capability procedures
- grievance procedures
- code of conduct
- equal opportunities
- harassment and bullying.

Definitions

In the context of this policy, a personal relationship is defined as:

- a family connection or
- a romantic/sexual relationship.

This policy applies to all employees of the Company. In relation to romantic/sexual partnerships, it applies to both opposite and same sex relationships.

Employees' responsibilities

To ensure potential conflicts of interest are avoided, employees are required to inform their line manager of any relationship which may affect their work or compromise the business in any way. Any such information will be treated in the strictest confidence. The Company fully acknowledges the right of employees to privacy in their personal affairs.

The following points should be observed:

- where the relationship exists between a member of staff and their line manager, it is the responsibility of both to inform a more senior manager
- if an employee who is applying for a role in an area of the business in which an individual works with whom they have a personal relationship, this must be declared during the recruitment process to ensure a fair and impartial recruitment exercise
- professionalism must always be maintained both at the workplace and any work-related events which are attended by employees who have a personal relationship

- consistency of treatment is paramount and no preferential or unfavourable treatment of those in the relationship or any other person is permitted as a result of the relationship.

Managers' responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the manager of a team within which employees are in a personal relationship to take action to ensure the relationship is not the cause of a conflict of interest. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times if the employees do not wish their relationship to be disclosed. Specifically, the manager should:

- consider alternative roles when an employee applies for a role in the same team as their partner and valid concerns are raised regarding the feasibility of this arrangement. This may include consideration of an equivalent role in a different team
- take action where complaints are received from other team members if tensions are caused by the relationship, howsoever they may arise. This may include reorganising working patterns, moving one or both employees to another department or area of the Company. Care should be taken in these circumstances not to make a decision on who is to be moved based on any discriminatory grounds. The manager should seek advice from the HR department before confirming any moves
- report suspicions of fraudulent activity to the Group Head of Finance or CFO
- take advice from the HR department in the event that a personal relationship breaks down in an attempt to avoid allegations of sexual harassment
- maintain an appropriate confidential record of personal relationships using Appendix 1 below.

Restricted activities

A more senior manager will be responsible for the conduct of operational matters when a personal relationship exists between a line manager and a person for whom the line manager has responsibility. These operational matters are, for example:

- dealing with any disciplinary or performance concerns, whether routine or caused by specific incidents
- signing off any hours worked above normal working hours
- authorising leave of any kind
- confirming any payment arrangements to be made
- involvement in reorganisation of the area of the business in which the employee works.

Annual leave requests

Annual leave requests from all employees will be dealt with consistently. The authorisation of any requests from partners in personal relationships to take time off at the same time will be made in consideration with the needs of the business at the time, in the same way as requests from other employees.

Policy breaches

The Company will attempt to deal with any difficulties caused by personal relationships in the workplace in a sensitive manner and an informal method will always be used in the first instance. However, where this does not bring about a satisfactory resolution, recourse to formal procedures, such as the disciplinary or procedure, may be required.

The Company may deem the following to be disciplinary offences:

- the failure of an employee to declare their relationship in accordance with this policy

- actions of a line manager who is in a personal relationship with an employee which are prohibited by this policy.
- Inappropriate and/or excessive use of the Company's IT or telephony systems, including email and instant messaging, such as (but not limited to) Microsoft Teams, for personal communication between those involved in personal relationships at work
- The sharing of inappropriate content using the Company's systems.
- Inappropriate physical interactions whilst working or on works premises or client's sites.
- Harassment of any kind, related or unrelated to a personal relationship and including but not limited to sexual harassment.

Employees who are subject to disciplinary action may lodge an appeal to any sanction applied that they are dissatisfied with.

Employees who feel they have been treated unfairly in some way in connection with a personal relationship may raise a grievance in line with the Company's grievance procedure if initial attempts at an informal resolution have not produced a satisfactory outcome for them.

Appendix 1*Strictly Private and Confidential***Declaration of Personal Relationship at Work**
To be completed by the line manager

<u>Name of employee:</u>	<u>Department:</u>
	<u>Job title:</u>
<u>Name of other employee in the personal relationship:</u>	<u>Department:</u>
	<u>Job title:</u>
<u>Name of line manager completing the form:</u>	
<u>Nature of relationship (strike out inapplicable option):</u>	
Family connection	Romantic/sexual relationship
Potential or foreseeable conflicts of interest and actions taken	
Potential or foreseeable conflicts of interest	Actions taken

Employee signature:

Date:

Line manager signature:

Date: