

LEICESTERSHIRE AIDS SUPPORT SERVICES
PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL BOUNDARIES POLICY
OCTOBER 2008

1. INTRODUCTION

Staff, placement students and volunteers working within LASS have a responsibility to provide safe, effective and caring services to service users within their care.

Whilst it is recognised that staff and volunteers must establish a rapport with service users and provide friendly and accessible services, they are, responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries between themselves and service users.

The rights and needs of service users should be respected at all times. However, by the very nature of the illness/disability of the service users at LASS the relationship between the service user and worker is not one of equal balance.

Staff, placement students and volunteers must recognise and understand that they are in a position of power. This power must not be abused at any time. It is essential therefore, that all interactions between service users and staff/volunteers must be seen in terms of a professional relationship. Staff and volunteers will be given a clear framework/role description within which to carry out interactions with service users. Because there is a potential for positions of power to be abused and professional boundaries broken, LASS makes it clear that the responsibility to maintain such boundaries rests with individual staff. Failure to meet this responsibility may lead to formal disciplinary action being taken against them.

Staff and volunteers must ensure that working relationships are not misread or confused with friendship or other personal relationships. This is essential in order to protect service users at a time when they may be vulnerable. It is also to protect staff and volunteers from any risk of potential false allegations.

If a member of staff is in any doubt they should seek advice from their manager, another manager at LASS or the CEO.

2. SCOPE

This policy is written for **all** staff and volunteers in relation to their work with service users who are currently receiving care, support advice or information from LASS or who had had services from LASS in the past. This applies to all staff and volunteers equally irrespective of role or pay level. The policy covers all areas of the services provided by LASS.

3. RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of all line managers to ensure their staff and volunteers have a full understanding of this policy and that the policy requirements are adhered to by them and their staff at all times.

4. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the division between the professional and personal relationships between service users and staff/volunteers therefore enabling consistent approaches to service users.

5. REQUIREMENTS

Immediately a member of staff or volunteer thinks that there is a risk of a potential breakdown of his/her professional boundaries he/she must bring it to the attention of the line manager.

If staff/volunteers feel a colleague is at risk of potential breakdown of professional boundaries then they too have a duty to protect both the service user and staff/volunteers, and should bring the matter to a manager.

Staff must alert their line manager if they have a personal knowledge of a service user who comes under their care.

If an employee is aware, or becomes aware that he/she is related to a service user then this should be brought to the immediate attention of their line manager.

6. DEFINITIONS

6.1 Professional Relationships

A professional relationship is a relationship between a service user and the employee/volunteer in whom the latter has a responsibility for ensuring that objectivity is achieved at all times.

6.2 Boundary

When the 'line' between the professional and personal relationship is crossed and the relationship between the service user and the employee/volunteer moves from being objective to subjective. An indication of this is found in Section 7 which identifies unacceptable behaviour.

6.3 Service User

- A current service user for whom the member of staff/volunteer is directly involved in providing care and support.
- The service user who has previously had direct care and support from an employee or volunteer at LASS.
- A current service user who has had no direct professional relationship with an employee.

7. UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICES

Unacceptable practices are those which put the professional/personal relationship in danger of crossing the professional 'boundary'. The following list not exhaustive and if staff are in any doubt they should consult with their manager.

7.1 Sexual Contact

- Sexual acts
- Requests for/suggestion of sexual acts
- Physical contact which could be construed as sexually suggestive sexual innuendo and/or insinuation.

Some examples of **more subtle inappropriate behaviour** may include the following:

- Inappropriate dress
- Inappropriate use of body or verbal language i.e. language which is used to satisfy the need of the employee concerned and are not likely to have any professional benefits for the service user.
- Asking the service user inappropriate questions regarding their sexual habits.
- Asking the service user inappropriate questions regarding their hygiene or sanitary issues.

7.2 Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality

Staff, placement students and volunteers must not accept any personal gift(s) or hospitality from service users which could be interpreted as being given by the service user in return for preferential treatment. Where it is difficult to refuse a gift, then the employee must discuss this with their line manager immediately.

7.3 Inappropriate Personal Disclosure

Staff, placement students and volunteers must not divulge any inappropriate personal information about themselves or other staff members.

7.4 Concealing Information from Colleagues about Service Users

This might include:

- personal information

- letting service users know where they or other staff members live.
- the intention of the service user to self-harm or harm others
- not reporting violent or critical incident/issues
- not reporting child protection/ vulnerable adult protection issues
- not completing full records of service users interactions

7.5 Misuse of Money/Property

Staff, placement students and volunteers must not accept any moneys, or gifts from service users.

If service users wish to donate to LASS they can send a cheque made payable to "LASS" and the money will be allocated to the fund most in need at the time of donation.

Staff, placement students and volunteers must get their manager's permission before loaning their personal property.

7.6 Misuse of Service User's Facilities and Property

Staff must not use service user's property for their own use.

Examples are as follows:

- Borrowing service user's television/videos (except for education and information purposes and where it is part of the care plan)
- Eating Service User's food.

7.7 Discrimination

This can take the form of subjective comments which can be either written or verbal in relation to a service user, in relation to culture or race, gender, sexual orientation or preference, age, physical characteristics or any other personal aspects. (refer to LASS equality Policy)

7.8 Treatment and other forms of Care

It is not acceptable for a member of staff or volunteer to carry out treatment or give other care when:

- it is not part of the service user's individual support plan
- the employee/volunteer is not qualified to provide this element of care or
- it has not been discussed with the team

Some examples of these are as follows:

- taking photographs without the service user's permission
- hair cuts
- alternative therapies

7.9 Abuse of Power/Creating a Dependence

Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to discourage over reliance of the service user on one employee/volunteer and to encourage and enable the service user towards independence. Some examples of abuse of power and the potential for creating a dependence are as follow:

- inviting service user to the worker's home
- socialising outside the professional role boundary relationship
- encouraging the service users to rely on one employee
- using the service user for the employee's emotional needs

8. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF AND MANAGERS

8.1 Staff Supervision

Staff and volunteers have monthly supervision, which is used constructively in the area of disclosing any feeling that they may be developing for the service user. These disclosures will be

kept confidential unless the situation remains unresolved and the relationship develops into a personal one, in which case the supervisor will be responsible for seeking further advice on this.

Training and Updating

All employees and volunteers have the responsibility to ensure that they have knowledge of and understanding of the importance of keeping professional boundaries.

Service User Information

Employees are expected to explain the relationship between them and the service user in a sensitive manner and where appropriate form a Individual Support Plan (ISP) with the service user.

8.2 Managers

Training and Updating

Managers are responsible for facilitating regular training and updating.

Service User Information

Managers will ensure that the service users have access to up to date information about services and service philosophies.

Cultural Differences

Staff should be aware of service user’s cultural differences and give due respect and dignity.

9. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS Monitoring Arrangements

The policy will be monitored via:

9.1 the range of policies and standards which are referred to in this document

9.2 the complaints procedure and the disciplinary procedure

LASS Document Control		
Approved by:		
Signature:		

Board Responsibility:		
Review Date:	November 2009	