



Professional Boundaries

Policy, Procedure and Practice

June 2021

Contents

Policy Summary	2
1: Introduction	3
1.1 Scope of the Policy	3
1.2 Who is the policy for?	3
1.3 Professional Codes of Conduct/Practice	4
Section 2: Principles.....	5
2.1 Working to Promote and Protect Rights and Interests	5
2.2 Building Trust	6
2.3 Upholding Public Confidence	6
2.4 Taking Responsibility	7
2.5 Safeguarding.....	7
2.6 Domestic Abuse	8
2.7 Respecting a Relationship of Trust	9
Section 3: Safe Working.....	11
3.1 Working Practice and Communicating the Standards	11
3.2 Using Professional Judgement.....	11
3.3 Confidentiality and Secure Storage of Data	12
3.4 Propriety and Behaviour.....	15
3.5 Dress.....	15
3.6 Gifts and Hospitality	15
3.7 Infatuations.....	16
3.8 Social Contact.....	17
3.9 Social Media.....	17
3.10 Physical Contact	18
3.11 Handling Money and Other Personal Possessions.....	19
3.12 Reporting Concerns, Allegations and Disclosures	21
Section 4: Where Can I go for further information	23
4.1 Management	23
4.2 Concerns around a Person in Position of Trust (PiPoT).....	23
4.3 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).....	24
4.4 Safeguarding Referrals	24
4.5 Training	24

Policy Summary

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1: Introduction

1.1 Scope of the Policy

This policy sets out accepted standards required of those working across adult social care services within Halton Borough Council.

It explores the principles of building effective helping relationships, and the values and ethics which make up the boundaries within which adult social care services are delivered.

The policy is intended to reduce the risk of allegations and complaints. It does this by giving employees and volunteers some practical guidance on how to establish and maintain professional relationships with the adults who they have contact with during the course of their work. This policy will raise awareness of illegal, inappropriate and inadvisable practices and help employees and volunteers to work in a way that can best protect both the service users and themselves.

Sometimes allegations are made against employees and volunteers. While some may be genuine, others may be misplaced, malicious or arise from different opinions about the same incident or event. Some situations that result in allegations or complaints against employees/volunteers could be avoided by taking care to observe 'professional boundaries' in day-to-day practice.

1.2 Who is the policy for?

The professional boundaries defined within this policy cover legal requirements and also represent the moral and ethical position of the Council. Adherence to professional boundaries is a required standard of all those conducting activity on behalf of adult social care services.

This policy is useful for employees as well as volunteers who, in the course of their work, may come into contact with adults with care and support needs.

Throughout this policy, where the term 'employees' has been used, this will refer to paid workers of Halton Borough Council.

The term 'volunteers' has also been used throughout this policy and refers to unpaid workers who, without reward or expectation of reward, perform task(s) on behalf of the Council. In the event of an allegation or breach of professional boundaries, volunteers would not have access to services provided by the Human Resources department within the Council (as received by paid employees) however, this policy still provides a standard of conduct for volunteers to adhere to.

Voluntary roles may also include those on work placements, internships, or other related programmes.

1.3 Professional Codes of Conduct/Practice

As some care professionals have their own codes of practice, the policy has been written as a summary document, for local use. It is primarily allied to Social Work England Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics, [SWE Standards of conduct](#) but it does not supersede any professional code that employees should follow as registered practitioners, for example, associated with registration as a nurse, occupational therapist or other professional status.

[NMC Standards for Nurses, Midwives and Nursing associates](#)

[Royal College of Occupational Therapists – Standards and Ethics](#)

It also takes into account other codes of practice such as those laid out by [Skills for Care](#), standards expected by the [Care Quality Commission](#) and [The Code of Ethics for Social Work](#) and [BASW Digital Capabilities for Social Workers](#) by *The British Association of Social Workers (BASW)*.

This document has been written as supplementary policy to reach a wider audience that will include all who have contact with adults with care and support needs in the broader community, as well as in people's homes and other settings where services are traditionally provided.

Section 2: Principles

2.1 Working to Promote and Protect Rights and Interests

Employees and volunteers must protect the rights, and act in the best interests, of service users, their carers and the wider public.

Employees and volunteers must:-

- Work professionally and always treat services users, carers, advocates and other colleagues and co-workers with honesty, dignity, respect and courtesy. You are responsible for your personal and professional conduct, any care or advice you provide and any failure to act.
- Treat service users as individuals, respecting different values, cultures and diversity. This means being non-judgemental and not allowing your views about a service user's age, faith, sexuality, ethnicity, gender, social or economic status, lifestyle or disability affect the way you deal with them or the professional advice you give.
- Advocate and empower self-direction and self-care, providing appropriate support so that informed decisions can be made. This includes respecting a person's right to choice, even where you feel a decision may be unwise or strange. You must however consider the decision making capacity of service users and protect those considered vulnerable if you believe that any situation puts them in danger – of either physical or mental harm.
[Mental Capacity Act 2005](#)
- Take appropriate action and follow correct procedures to protect the rights, wellbeing and safety of anyone (adults or children) at risk of being exposed to harm or danger, including abuse through coercion and control and financial abuse and fraud. This includes whistleblowing in respect of the conduct, performance or the health of a colleague (e.g.; stress levels or capacity to carry out moving and handling duties), albeit to protect them or the people they are working with.
Staff also have an obligation to report anyone they suspect of fraudulent claims for Council services, support or financial payments. [Whistleblowing](#)
- Work collaboratively and co-operatively with service users, their carers, advocates or wider support network and partner agencies and organisations who may also be involved in a person's care and support. Developing effective partnerships promotes participation, enables social inclusion and supports the development of strengths.

- Deal fairly and safely to protect service users, yourself and your colleagues from the risks of infection, including taking appropriate protective precautions. This may involve accessing information, advice, guidance, appropriate training or personal protective equipment where required.
See also: [Corporate Health and Safety policies](#)

2.2 Building Trust

All employees and volunteers must act with honesty and integrity at all times to maintain the trust and confidence of service users and their carers.

This includes:

- Communicating openly, clearly and in a straightforward and effective way, sharing your knowledge and expertise for the benefit of service users. There may be communication impediments such as poor hearing, poor vision and speech impediments that may make communication very difficult. Check to see what other communication methods might be appropriate, for example, photographs, pictures, or sign language.
- Respecting the confidentiality of service users and using information only for the purposes they have provided it for. Keep to the conditions of any relevant data protection laws and follow best practice for handling and recording confidential information.
[The Data Protection Act](#)
- Abiding by the Council's IT Security and Information Governance Handbook, using the most appropriate means of communicating information.
[Information Governance Handbook](#)
- Helping service users and their carers follow procedures to make complaints and treating their complaints and concerns seriously.
See also: [Adult Social Care – Resolving Complaints and Improving Services](#)

2.3 Upholding Public Confidence

Employees and volunteers must never:

- Abuse, neglect, harm, exploit or discriminate against service users, carers or colleagues or mistreat them in any way.
- Abuse the trust of service users or their carers or the access that they have to personal information about the service user.
- Abuse the access they have to service users' property, home or workplace.

- Form or encourage inappropriate relationships with service users.
- Favour one service user over another. Building rapport is an important part of establishing an effective helping relationship but time and resource utilised should be proportionate with care and support needs.

Employees and volunteers must:

- Report any dangerous, abusive, discriminatory or exploitative practice to the appropriate supervisor of their work.

2.4 Taking Responsibility

All employees and volunteers are responsible for the quality of their work and for maintaining and improving their own knowledge and skills. This includes:

- Meeting good standards of practice and working in a safe and effective way.
- Keeping clear records in-line with policies and procedures which relate to work-based practices, such as informed consent to provide care or services.
- Asking for line manager help if they are not able, or properly prepared, to carry out any part of their work.
- Undertaking relevant training to keep skills up-to-date and improve their knowledge.
- Informing their line manager if training is required in a specific topic.

Giving appropriate instruction and supervision to whoever you ask to carry out a task. Whenever you give tasks to another person to carry out on your behalf you must be sure that they have the knowledge, skills and experience to carry out the task safely and effectively

2.5 Safeguarding

All staff, whatever the setting, have a key role in the prevention of harm or abuse, and in taking action when concerns arise.

Where Employees and/or Volunteers are concerned about the care provided to a service user or suspect there may be an instance of abuse, neglect or harm they must follow the Council's Safeguarding Procedures.

Adult safeguarding referrals can be made to Halton Borough Council's 24-hour Contact Centre on 0151 907 8306 or Integrated Adult Safeguarding Unit Tel: 0151 511 8555 or by email adultsafeguarding@halton.gov.uk

Further information on risk factors, examples of what behaviours constitute abuse and how to respond if you witness or hear of abuse, is available in Halton's Safeguarding Adults procedures

[Halton Safeguarding Adults Procedures](#)

All employees and volunteers should be given access to safeguarding e-learning as part of their induction period. Robust induction processes form a vital process in setting the standards expected of those working or volunteering in adult social care services.

Similarly, if concerns about the welfare or safety of children arise, then this should be referred to Children's Services. For child welfare or child protection concerns, Halton Children's Social Care Contact Centre can be contacted on 0151 907 8305.

For information and advice relating to safeguarding children, the following can be used:

[Children's Safeguarding](#)

Should an employee or volunteer feels that they themselves or a service user in their care is in immediate danger of imminent and significant harm the police should be called on the relevant emergency services on 999.

2.6 Domestic Abuse

Where an Employee and/or Volunteer suspects domestic abuse, they should signpost or refer as appropriate those concerned to the Halton Domestic Abuse Service who can be contacted on 0300 11 11 247 (24-hour local helpline).

Domestic Abuse is a systematic abuse of power and control that takes place within particular relationships.

Halton has adopted the Government definition of domestic violence and abuse as follows:

'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.'

This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their

8 | Page

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resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.'

This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so-called 'honour' based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Staff need to be alert to the risks of sexual violence/abuse. The Halton information line for the Cheshire and Merseyside Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre) is open Monday to Friday from 0900 to 1600 hours and can be contacted on 01928 477980.

2.7 Respecting a Relationship of Trust

Halton Borough Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of adults with care and support needs and expects all employees, and those with whom the Council contracts to, to share this commitment. All employees and volunteers who come into contact with the public as part of their role are placed in a position of trust and have a duty of care to safeguard and promote their welfare.

A 'Relationship of Trust' within social care means that power, influence and authority is used appropriately to support, inform, advise and guide those with care and support needs. It involves employees and volunteers working in the best interest of the service user, giving them the best opportunities to maximise their independence and individuality. All service users have the right to lead normal lives and any care provided should maximise this right.

Professional boundaries are particularly helpful within a 'Relationship of Trust' where one of the people in the relationship is in a particular situation that could have the potential to make him or her vulnerable. The Home Office says that in some services the relationship between the service user and an employee is always one of trust.

Some of these services are:

- Counselling services
- All psychiatric services
- Residential care services
- Domiciliary care services
- Services designed for people with learning disabilities.
- Nursing Care Services

This is not an exhaustive list and could include a number of other roles that employees and volunteers within Halton Borough Council carry out.

This means that employees and volunteers have 'Relationships of Trust' with all those who have care and support needs whom they have contact with in the course

of their work. In relationships like these, where one person may have greater capacity for power or knowledge over the other, there are risks that the person can be exploited or harmed.

Employees and volunteers should always take care to maintain professional relationships with service users. This involves ensuring that anyone involved in their care does not use their power for their own gratification, including, but not exclusively, gaining psychological influence over a person; exploiting them physically, emotionally or financially; breaching their confidence or right to privacy; or undermining their individuality and independence.

Section 3: Safe Working

3.1 Working Practice and Communicating the Standards

This policy has been written to raise awareness of illegal, unsafe, unwise and unethical working practices and employees/ volunteers should use this policy to ensure they are meeting the required standards.

Managers should therefore ensure that the policy is available to those people they manage, either via the Council's induction process, through supervision or revisited within the annual Employee Development Review (EDR). Within this they should be regularly reminded of good practice and the need to follow this policy.

It is suggested that line managers keep a record of communication of this policy. This could be in the form of staff members signing to demonstrate that they have read and understood the document.

This is important if working practices fall short of expected standards as this may result in the disciplinary policy being applied. See also: [HBC Disciplinary Procedures](#)

3.2 Using Professional Judgement

This policy does not give employees and volunteers a complete checklist of what is or isn't appropriate behaviour for those who come into contact, during the course of their work, with people who require care and supporting need. This is because every possible situation cannot be accounted for or anticipated.

There will be occasions when employees and volunteers have to make decisions or take actions where there may be no distinct guidance. Employees and volunteers may have to make their own judgements and must ensure they act in the best interests of the person they provide care and support to.

Professionally registered practitioners work autonomously in accordance with their occupational knowledge, skills and competence. They are supported through appropriate supervision processes. All other employee or volunteer should similarly work within the limits of their own knowledge, skills and competence, and adhere to performance management processes. Where a decisions needs to be made and the person is unsure of what they should do they should seek clarification from their line manager or appropriate supervisor.

In situations where there is no available support, or where circumstances mean that employees or volunteers have to go against guidance, the worker should take the following steps, to ensure that the risk of misunderstandings or misguided allegations has been reduced:

- Employees and volunteers should report any action or inaction to their line manager/supervisor and describe why they acted in the way they did.
- Always talk about any misunderstandings, accidents, incidents or threats with a line manager/supervisor as soon as possible following an event or occurrence.
- Always make a note of these discussions, listing the circumstances in which they occurred, the actions taken and the reasons for these actions.

Employees and Volunteers must, at all times, be aware of their impact on service users, their carers and others they encounter during the course of their social care activities. They must communicate with them in such a way that is understandable to them and are expected to follow the values of Halton's duty of care in relation to:

- Safeguarding
- Dignity, respect and candour
- Health, safety, welfare and wellbeing

This involves ensuring that a person with care and support needs is not put at risk of exploitation, danger, neglect, deprivation of liberty, discrimination, harm, abuse, or improprieties which impact negatively or have a damaging effect of their lives, livelihood or wellbeing.

In some instances, it may be necessary to refer to the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

[Mental Capacity Act 2005](#)

3.3 Confidentiality and Secure Storage of Data

Employees and volunteers should treat information about service users in confidence and be aware of the Data Protection Act as well as Caldicott principles.

Employees and volunteers should not:

- Use confidential information for their own advantage, or for anyone else's.
- Use confidential information to intimidate, humiliate or discriminate against service users.
- Share confidential information about service users with other people, except on a 'need to know' basis. *'Need to know' involves sharing information only where it is necessary and essential to meet the care and support needs of the service user, including safeguarding their welfare and keeping them safe from harm'.*
- Promise service users complete confidentiality, because you might have to share information, for example, in situations where there is a suspicion of abuse or where other people might be at risk.

- Use the name of the service user or other identifying features within conversations and other communications when the information could be conveyed without use of the information.

Employees and volunteers must:

- Make sure if confidential information has to be shared, that the correct procedures are followed and adhere to the Data Protection Act and Information Governance guidance.
- Ask a line manager for advice if you are unsure about whether to share information or not.
- Before sharing information, try to get the service user's consent. If this is not possible, the employee or volunteer may have to override this requirement if the disclosure is in the service user's best interest. Employees and volunteers may need to refer to guidance and possibly seek legal advice in respect of what circumstances this may apply.

As part of their social care assessments service users will be asked to consent to share information with appropriate agencies in order that their individual care and support needs can be met. Please see also: Consent to Share Information form

The Data Protection Act states that data must be:

1. *Processed fairly and lawfully.*
2. *Processed for limited purposes.*
3. *Adequate, relevant and not excessive.*
4. *Accurate and where necessary kept up to date.*
5. *Not kept longer than necessary.*
6. *Processed in line with the data subject's rights.*
7. *Secure.*
8. *Not transferred to countries outside the EEA without adequate protection.*

[Gov.uk-Caldicott Guidance](#)

Storage of Information and Electronic Data

Employees and volunteers must:

- Secure service user information in a lockable storage facility or lockable box. Material should not be left in a place where unauthorised persons may gain access, or left in a car. *This includes any handwritten notes which may include personally identifiable information.*
- Ensure that any emails are sent with the protection of up-to-date anti-virus software.

For more information, please refer to the [Information Security Policy](#) and the [Information Governance Handbook](#).

13 | Page

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Employees and volunteers must not:

- Take photos of service users on a camera, mobile phone, tablets or other electronic devices nor should they be used to record video footage of service users. Exceptions can only be made with specific prior permission from the relevant service and the consent of the service user.

Halton Borough Council Social Care Services IT systems

Social care casefile records and documentation are kept on secure IT systems. Primarily, for social care, this involves the use of the Council's ESCR (Electronic Social Care Records) SharePoint site and the data system 'CareFirst'. Some services may use different systems, for example, the Mental Health Recovery Team, based at Halton Hospital record information on the health IT care system 'Rio'.

Employees of Halton Borough Council are expected to record casefile information, correspondence and communications, as part of their social care role. This should be done accurately, timely and appropriately.

Paper-based files are no longer common-place. Where paper documents are submitted (e.g. signed forms) these should be scanned and recorded on the ESCR system (or other appropriate system according to the service requirements). All documentation are to be stored against specific 'Content Types' that stipulate a retention period in accordance with the Local Government Classification Retention Scheme (LGCRS), an Information Management Policy and have specific rules around Record Management and when a document should be archived.

Documents are stored in a defined folder structure with associated document templates. Permission levels are designated so that there is control over who has access across the different sections of a file. The system logs who accesses what and when. The ESCR system is only accessible by authorised CareFirst users.

It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that records are appropriately stored. Supervisors/Line Managers will be responsible for instruction/training on the relevant systems.

Records of activity and interactions between service users and volunteers will be captured on appropriate casefiles by Halton Borough Council employees. This involves volunteers communicating and conveying appropriate information with their designated supervisor and may involve the volunteer being asked to write up accounts of proceedings/ situations/ occurrences. *Volunteers will be given literacy/numeracy support as required.*

3.4 Propriety and Behaviour

Employees and volunteers should adopt high standards of personal conduct to ensure that the Council maintains the confidence of the general public.

Employees and volunteers must not:

- Make offensive or derogatory remarks to a service user.
- Discuss their own personal business, including sexual relationships, with a service user or while a service user is present.
- Talk about a service user's relationship in inappropriate settings or contexts.
- Make or encourage anyone else to make personal comments, which might hurt or humiliate service users.
- Incite a service user to use inappropriate language or terms, including innuendos, which they may or may not understand.
- Assume a misplaced sense of solidarity with a service user because of behaviours they display. For example, should a service user tell an inappropriate joke it should be recognised as such and not reciprocated?
- Take part in banter or exchanges which may be misconstrued.

Employees and volunteers witnessing this type of behaviour need to be accountable for reporting it to their line manager or appropriate supervisor. *Employees or volunteers found to be acting unsuitably or inappropriately will be subject to proceedings against the relevant disciplinary policy.*

3.5 Dress

Employees are expected to use good judgment by dressing in a manner that is presentable, appropriate and safe for the role and activities they are involved in.

Courtesy to co-workers, respect to the needs of individual service users and your professional image should be the factors that are used to assess that you are dressing appropriately.

3.6 Gifts and Hospitality

All employees and volunteers should ensure that they know the Council's position on gifts and hospitality, which can be found in the Officer's Code of Conduct.

While being respectful of people's cultures, employees should not accept gifts from service users. Token gifts of a at Christmas or on birthdays, for example, are

15 | Page

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acceptable but employees must inform their line manager if a service user gives them any gift and must not accept gifts exceeding the values outlined in the Officer's Code of Conduct.

Employees and volunteers should recognise that service users often want to give gifts to their carers and that they may perceive an employee or volunteer as their friend. It is up to the employee/volunteer, as the professional/designated helper, to maintain appropriate boundaries in accordance with this policy.

Employees and volunteers must not give gifts to service users as they, or their families, could misinterpret the gesture and may think that a favour is expected in return, or that social courtesies or norms indicate they should reciprocate. The giving of Christmas and birthday cards, or cards to celebrate other religious festivals or occasions, is acceptable. *Small gifts of nominal value such as trade promotional materials e.g. inexpensive calendars, diaries, tape measures, etc. or similar articular for use at work are permissible. Courtesy visits, for example to a care setting or other premises, are acceptable in terms of building partnership relationships. Please refer to the Officer's Code of Conduct in relation to offers of more generous hospitality.*

It is unacceptable to accept gifts on a regular basis, or to accept gifts which are valuable.

[Officers Code of Conduct](#)

3.7 Infatuations

Employees and volunteers should be aware that sometimes service users can develop strong attractions or affection for their carer/ support worker/ professional helper. If this happens to an employee or volunteer, they should respond sensitively so that the service user is not embarrassed, but take care not to appear to reciprocate in any way or behave in any way that could be misinterpreted.

When a service user has an infatuation with the person charged with their care and support it is more likely that the employees' or volunteers' words or actions will be misinterpreted. This can lead to allegations being made against them or for it to be interpreted as "grooming". *'Grooming' is a term used to describe the development of inappropriate emotional connection for the purposes of manipulating and/or abusing a person.*

As an employee or volunteer, if you find that a service user is infatuated with you or a colleague, the worker must:

- Report any signs (e.g. verbal, written or physical) that make you think the service user is indicating, to the relevant line manager.
- Talk with the relevant line manager/ supervisor, as soon as possible, and agree how to deal with the situation.

- Try to avoid distressing the service user, whatever action(s) are decided upon.
- Be aware that infatuations carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted. It is important to acknowledge and maintain robust professional boundaries.

3.8 Social Contact

Examples of social contact include use of mobile phones, emails, text messages, letters, face-to-face communication and giving lifts to people.

Employees and volunteers must not:

Arrange any social contact with service users outside of their work activities. If social contact outside of work happens by coincidence, the employee should think carefully about how they react and be aware that any social contact might be misunderstood. Any employee or volunteer, who has inadvertent regular social contact with any service users, should inform their line manager so that it can be noted. *For example, the service user may frequent the same supermarket, pub, church or other community setting.*

- Give their personal details to service users. This includes home address, personal mobile or home telephone numbers and personal email addresses.
- Take service users to an employees' or volunteers' home, with the exception of where an Adult Placement Carer agreement has sanctioned this as part of that particular role.
- Give lifts to service users, unless this is part of the job role and has been agreed and recorded appropriately.

All work communications with service users should be carried out in-line with any relevant corporate policies.

Any potential conflicts of interest, for example an employee or volunteer has a personal, professional or familial relationship with a service user prior to commencing work with them, should be reported to the appropriate line managers or supervisor. *Declarations of interest include financial interests, for example a vested interest in gaining contracts or business.*

3.9 Social Media

Employees and volunteers working with adult social care services must not:

- Make contact with service users through social networking sites. *Social networking sites include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Myspace, Bebo, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn, Myspace, Yammer and Tumblr.*

- Comment on or refer to services user, including to other 'friends', on social networking sites
- Respond to any contact/request for contact (including requests to 'friend' or 'follow') from a service user other than to delete/block.

Privacy settings should be set high so that no one, other than your own social network, can view any details of your private or personal life. It is advised that staff with unusual surnames take extra measures to ensure they are not easily found on searches.

Refer to the Acceptable Use policy for further information, particularly Social Networking [Link to HBC Acceptable Use Policy and Social Networking Guidance](#)

3.10 Physical Contact

Sometimes it is appropriate for an employee or volunteer to have physical contact with a service user, but it is very important that this contact is done in ways that are appropriate to a professional role such as supporting personal health care needs.

Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the employee's or volunteer's own gratification. If an employee or volunteer feels that any physical contact with service users could be misinterpreted, the relevant line manager or supervisor should be informed so that a record of the incident can be noted.

Halton Borough Council has a number of policies which are related to physical contact and these should be read, and any procedures included in the policies should be followed. These policies include:

[Restrictive Physical Interventions Policy](#)
[Intimate Relationships and Sexual Health Needs for Adults – Policy, Procedure and Practice.](#)
[Corporate Manual Handling Policies- People](#)

There may be times when a service user is distressed and needs comforting and this might involve physical contact. Employees and volunteers need to remember to be aware of their actions when this happens and ensure they do not act in an intimidating, threatening or suggestive manner. Line Managers/ Supervisors should always be informed when and how comfort has been offered to a distressed service user, so that a record of the interaction can be made.

All service users have a right to dignity, safety and privacy at all times, but particularly when intimate or personal care is needed. Service users should be encouraged to be as independent as possible, so that they can take on as much of

their own care as they can. Only those authorised to undertake this level of care should do so.

Any behaviour, between an employee or volunteer and a service user, which may be interpreted or understood as sexual in nature, is unacceptable and might be illegal, but in any case is a moral and ethical issue.

A sexual relationship with anyone an employee or volunteer has previously cared for, or their carer, will often be deemed inappropriate however long ago the professional relationship ended. This is because the relationship may be influenced by the previous professional relationship, which will have often involved an imbalance of power as described in 2.6 or grooming as described in 3.7

It is not possible to have rules about all types of physical contact in all situations. What might be acceptable with one service user in one situation may be inappropriate in another, or with a different service user. Due to this reason, it is very important that professional and reasoned judgement is used at all times, following any guidelines that exist and talking to a relevant line manager/ supervisor if any concerns arise or if anyone else expresses any concerns.

Good professional behaviour should leave no room for confusion as to whether an employee or volunteer has or has not acted in an appropriate manner. Employees and volunteers must be aware that the onus will always be on them as the professional, not the service user, to show that the employee or volunteer has acted professionally – even when the professional relationship has long since ended. Accurate record-keeping evidencing clear decision-making is invaluable to clarify situation which later may be queried as areas of concern. They aid better recall of an incident and serve as confirmation of how the situation developed at the time.

Anyone expected to undertake intimate or personal care as part of their social care role is subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check
[Safer Recruitment Policy - Disclosure and Barring Service](#)

3.11 Handling Money and Other Personal Possessions

Some service users may need support to manage their money, or look after their possessions. At the same time, they should have access to both their own possessions and money and decide for themselves how to spend it.

Where service users cannot manage their own finances, a referral needs to be made via the Contact Centre to an appropriate team, to agree how this need might be met. For example, if the service user needs guidance and support, a capacity assessment or a referral to the Appointee and Receivership Team should be made through their Social Work team.

As part of certain job roles, employees or volunteers may have access to service users' possessions and finances or may be asked to buy something on their behalf. If this situation occurs, employees and volunteers must:

- Keep receipts for everything bought on behalf of a service user.
- Record details for everything bought on the relevant forms used in your service area.
- Use the service user's money, not your own (see further notes below).
- Report any damage to service users' property or possessions that happens whilst the employee is providing care or support, including how this occurred.
- Where a service user has had to leave their home unattended e.g. admission to hospital, the employee or volunteer must inform their Principal/Line Manager if there is cash left in the house. The Principal/Line Manager, with the service user's permission where appropriate, will arrange for the cash to be removed to a Halton Borough Council safe or the service user's bank or post office account.

Employees and volunteers must not:

- Accept gifts of cash (please see section 3.6 Gifts and Hospitality).
- Use loyalty cards except those belonging to the service user, when shopping on their behalf (also, employees and volunteers must not use the service user's loyalty cards when shopping for themselves).
- Employees and volunteers should not use their own money to buy things for a service user, except in emergencies. See additional notes below.
- Make personal use of service users' property e.g. telephone, clothes, CDs, DVDs, personal computer/tablet.
- Involve the service user in gambling syndicates e.g. national lottery.
- Borrow or lend money or possessions to/from service users.
- Sell goods or services to service users, or buy from service users.
- Sell or dispose of goods which belong to service users or their families.

- Take on any debt on behalf of a service user, including actions like underwriting loans, even when it is believed the service user has the means to fulfil the payments.
- Be involved in the writing of a service user's will. This includes not recommending a solicitor, not being present when the will is written, not being a witness to the will and not being executor or beneficiary.
- Knowingly trade with service users or their close relatives or friends.
- Make recommendations (for example, advising a service user to refer an insurance matter to a personal friend who is in the insurance business, or advising a service user to use a builder they know to complete an adaptation). Lists of Local Authority approved contractors are available, and Care and Repair can provide similar lists. If an Employee or Volunteer is asked by a service user to recommend a service they should discuss this with their line manager/supervisor.

Some provider services will have their own policies which deal with handling service users' money and employees and volunteers should make sure that they have read and understood these.

Legitimate arrangements can be made for a service user to relinquish control over their financial affairs, through a lasting or enduring power of attorney or court ordered power of attorney arrangement.

See also:

[Mental Capacity -Advance Planning](#)

[Corporate Appointeeship and Deputyship Scheme](#)

Use of own money -

In exceptional emergency circumstances, when the service user needs an essential item (food, electricity top up etc.) and there is no petty cash available, employees can lend their own money to the petty cash, but not directly to the service user. This should only occur if there is no other option. The employee should report this to their line manager as soon as possible and record the purchase on the correct form and claim their money back from the petty cash, in agreement with their line manager.

Money should never be subbed on the understanding that it will be paid back at another time. Workers or volunteers could find that reimbursement is reneged upon.

3.12 Reporting Concerns, Allegations and Disclosures

It is essential that employees and volunteers follow the appropriate guidelines, when reporting any concerns, allegations or disclosures:-

21 | Page

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- A whistle-blowing concern is about a risk, malpractice or wrongdoing that affects others. It could be something which adversely affects service users, the public, other staff or the organisation itself. The policy sets out the ways in which individuals may raise concerns and how those concerns will be dealt with. It also gives protection to the person raising concerns.
- Halton's Safeguarding Adults procedures contains specific help for when you are reporting suspected abuse. [Halton Safeguarding Adults Procedures](#)
- Halton Safeguarding Children Board Pan-Cheshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Procedures - this contains specific help for when you are reporting suspected abuse in relation to a child.

If you have concerns but you aren't sure how to raise them or want advice about good practice, you can call the NHS and Social Care Whistleblowing Helpline on: 08000 724 725. They aren't a disclosure line but they can advise on the whistleblowing process.

Allegations of misconduct, inappropriate behaviour, abuse, neglect, disrespect or other contravention of the boundaries covered within this policy and those expected of professionals will be taken seriously, with an appropriate investigation taking place. This may involve a discussion between line manager and employee or volunteer, it may involve action through a disciplinary process; it may involve police investigation or other proceedings – dependant on the nature and severity of the situation. Any remedial or punitive action will be determined in accordance with the process followed. A founded breach of professional conduct may result in the regulating body withdrawing registration.

See also:

[Whistleblowing Policy](#)

[Safeguarding Adults Policy](#)

[Halton Safeguarding Children Board](#)

Section 4: Where Can I go for further information

4.1 Management

Line Managers or another manager can always be contacted if an employee or volunteer needs information, advice or guidance about professional boundaries and keeping safe at work.

Managers are there to support employees and volunteers and to make sure they have everything required to do their job properly and well. If an employee or volunteer ever has any worries or concerns, they should always speak to their line manager.

Decisions made (be they in respect of certain courses of action or inaction) should be founded on professional judgement, a clear evidence-base, legitimate practice, the service user's best interests and good intent. Lines of management provide staff or volunteers with the opportunity to explore scenarios and situations, either before or after a decision are made, so that clarity can be sought and reflection can be made. The support a manager offers should be accepted as that of a 'critical friend'.

All adult social care employees are entitled to supervision sessions with their manager, but people should not wait for the next supervision session if they have any concerns in the meantime.

Should employees or volunteers have concerns regarding their immediate line managers/supervisor's conduct they should escalate their concern to the next management tier.

A 'critical friend' is a trusted person who will take all the evidence and offer an alternative perspective, acting as an advocate for the success of the decision. They may do this through exploratory questioning.

4.2 Concerns around a Person in Position of Trust (PiPoT)

A North West Policy for Managing Concerns around People in Positions of Trust with Adults who have Care and Support Needs has been developed. This policy relates to those instances where a relevant agency is alerted to information that may affect the suitability of a professional or volunteer to work with an adult(s) at risk, where such information has originated from activity outside their professional or volunteer role and place of work. The alleged victim does not have to be an adult at risk, for example, it could be their partner or child. The policy refers to when there is an allegation which does not directly involve an adult at risk, but may have risk implications in relation to the employment or volunteer work of a person in a position of trust (PiPoT).

[North West PiPoT Policy](#)

4.3 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

The Local Authority Designated Officer will co-ordinate and oversee investigations where allegations against a professional who works within regulated activity with Children has been made and where the LADO threshold has been met.

The Local Authority Designated Officer considers cases where the person has:-

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

For child welfare or child protection concerns, Halton Children's Social Care Contact Centre can be contacted on 0151 907 8305. Outside of office hours the emergency duty team is available on 0345 050 0148.

The Local Authority Designated Officer consultation contact forms can be accessed via [Halton Children and Young People Safeguarding Partnership](#)

4.4 Safeguarding Referrals

Halton's Integrated Adults Safeguarding Unit is based within the People Directorate and can be contacted for advice on Halton's safeguarding vulnerable adult's arrangements.

However, safeguarding referrals can also be made to Halton Borough Council's 24 hour Contact Centre on 0151 907 8306 or to the Integrated Adult Safeguarding Unit Tel: 0151 511 8555 or adultsafeguarding@halton.gov.uk

4.5 Training

If employees or volunteers feel that their knowledge or skills need to be widened, updated or otherwise augmented, their line manager should be informed. Dialogue regarding need can be raised at any time or can take place through the supervision process or within the annual Employee Development Review (EDR).

Line managers will support identification and access to appropriate training which will meet their team members' needs.

Learning may be accessed via a number of routes including:

- HBC training calendar (available on the Council intranet)
- External short courses (see also the learning and development Short Course Application Process)
- Training offered through partner organisations
- e-learning (available on the internet to all Halton employees and partners)

- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Shadowing
- Action Learning Sets
- Formal qualifications (see also the learning and development Post Entry Training process)
- Self-directed learning
- Reflective practice
- Scenario evaluation as part of team meetings

See also

[Halton Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy 2021-2023](#)