

Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway provides policies and procedures to promote safe and consistent practice across the Organisation. The framework laid down within our policies and procedures lets everyone know how we work and reflects our values and mission statement. Our policies and procedures are written to help us, employees of Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway, to make good, safe decisions.

Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway expects all employees to be familiar with the contents of all policies and procedures relevant to their role and to understand how to apply them within their daily work.

None of these documents stand alone, all fit within the larger framework of the way we work and any associated policies that are particularly relevant will be directly referenced.

Employee and Friendship Policy

 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Giving and Receiving Gifts Policy.

Employee and Friendship Policy – what this means to Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway

Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway recognises the importance of and benefit of positive meaningful relationships. We believe in the importance of developing professional friendship with boundaries as many people we support have negative experiences of formal relationships within their life.

By developing a professional friendship with boundaries, you can teach the person you support to learn appropriate relationship skills and teach them what ‘friendship’ is, whilst maintaining your professional boundaries as stipulated within the person’s Working Policy.

Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway recognise that through the nature of our work, we do build friendships between us and the people we support. We take care to match staff to people they support, and will have tried to match you with someone we think you will get on with, share interests with and hopefully someone who you come to care about. To be good at our jobs we must be **friendly** towards and be interested in the people we support. **Being** a friend is different from this and goes beyond the paid role we have in the lives of the people we support.

However, this can be further complicated

Some of us may wish to develop friendships with the people we support and this can be complicated due to the professional role we hold and the vulnerability of the people we support. Because of this, we need to think and plan carefully should we wish to develop our relationship with any of the people we support.

This policy describes how we pay attention to making the right decisions about:

- Recognising the power imbalance with the person you support
- Developing a friendship with people we support
- What should happen for the friendship to develop safely
- What must not happen within a friendship with someone we support.

The following cannot happen before the proper discussions, planning and Safety Assessments are put in place

- Any of the people we support visiting our homes
- Our family or friends visiting the homes of the people we support, or vice versa.

Recognising the power imbalance with the person you support

We recognise that those we support are often isolated from many groups within society and will seek to make or are solely reliant on the relationships with those who work with them. It is important for all employees to recognise the power they hold within the relationship and that they maintain the professional boundaries and actively provide opportunities for positive and meaningful relationships.

Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway works within the parameters of hate and crime and does not condone any employees to abuse the powers they hold within the relationship with the person they support.

Developing a friendship with a person we support

We must be aware that many of the people we support have been supported by a lot of different providers over the years. Because some may have experienced institutionalised approaches, the

people we support may often have had little opportunities to make lasting relationships and sometimes employees have been the closest relationship they have had. Many of these employees will have told the person they are their friend and when they moved to another job, they would visit regularly. Sadly, this does not usually happen and the person we support feels upset and let down. Therefore, if you are beginning to think you can offer the person you support friendship, there are some issues, which must be discussed with your line manager.

- Do you genuinely like the person as a friend? (i.e. what would you bring to each other's lives if you had a friendship)
- Do you genuinely want this person to become part of your life outside work?
- How might the person you support feel about being your 'friend' rather than you 'employer'?
- What effect could a friendship have on your ability to support the person professionally?
- How will your professional role be affected if the friendship does not work out?

After these issues have been discussed thoroughly with your line manager or the relevant Service Leader and there is joint agreement that there is a basis to consider developing a friendship with someone we support, the next steps can be taken.

Developing a friendship safely

After the discussions described above have taken place, the person's Local Authority Care Manager/Guardian, if applicable, will be consulted to ensure the friendship will be in the best interests of the person. If the Care Manager/Guardian accepts that the correct thought has been given to a friendship developing between yourself and a person we support, the following points should be paid attention to:

- How and when the person spends time with you when you are not being paid should be discussed openly at Team Meetings and within your Support & Supervision.
- If the person is to visit you at your home, this must be discussed in advance with your line manager. When the person is at your home, you must remember that, although you are not acting as an employee of Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway, you should be able to show you are thoughtful about the welfare of someone who is vulnerable.
- Be sensible – do not do anything that may put the person you support, your friend, at risk of injury or exploitation. If an accident/unacceptable situation happens when the person is spending time with you as your friend, Beyond Limits Dumfries & Galloway may wish to investigate the matter formally.

You may also feel that one of your friends or relatives would make a good friend for the person you support. All the points above would need to be discussed with your line manager or the relevant Service Leader so that the developing friendship is thoughtful and in the best interests of the person you support. The following also should happen:

- When your friend/relative visits the person you support another member of the team should be supporting the person.
- Your friends/relatives cannot stay overnight at the person we support's home without express written agreement from the relevant Service Leader.
- You should remember that you have undertaken to keep information you know about the person confidential. Information relating to the care and support of the person must not be shared with your friend/relative.
- If your friend/relative tells you they have feelings of a sexual nature towards one of the people we support you must report it to your line manager/service leader immediately.

If after all the safeguards above have been put in place and everyone is happy for it you, your friend/relative to build a friendship with someone we support, how it will work will be written into the person's Working Policy.

Because we have a duty to make sure the people we support are kept safe we can be clear about what cannot happen if you are building a friendship with someone we support

Under no circumstances can the following happen:

- We must not invite/take the person we support in to our home, social or family network because the team has employment problems, it's for our convenience or we have personal difficulties (e.g. childcare issues)
- If we think we are developing feelings of a sexual nature towards one of the people we support we must discuss this with our line manager promptly and certainly before any sexual contact occurs. You will be unable to continue in a paid role with that person.
- If a person we support has discussed/or you think may have feelings of a sexual nature towards you, you must report this to your line manager immediately.
- Any employee using their power to negatively influence the person they support within their relationship.
- Manipulation of the person's thoughts and feelings for your own personal gain/advantage.