

SHARING LIVES

Boundaries Policy

Introduction

In all areas of its ministry, Sharing Lives seeks to provide a compassionate and professional service to all those who are the beneficiaries of the Charity's care. This document provides a framework to support Sharing Lives staff and volunteers in establishing and maintaining suitable "professional" boundaries between themselves and beneficiaries. Copies of the Policy will also be made available to any individuals who may be working over a period of time at any facility used by Sharing Lives.

The following guidelines explain the need to maintain suitable boundaries and relationships with those being supported by the Charity. References made to staff with regard to appropriate boundaries can be read as applying similarly to volunteers and any persons working at a Sharing Lives facility.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Sharing Lives' Safeguarding Policy.

What are Boundaries?

- Boundaries set the parameters of what is and is not acceptable behaviour by staff in the workplace.
- Boundaries help to protect and inform both staff and beneficiaries by clarifying appropriate types of behaviour.
- Boundaries help to give staff confidence as they understand more clearly how to react in various situations.
- Boundaries encourage high standards of work and consistency within the staff team.
- Boundaries help staff members to develop trusting relationships with those in their care.
- Boundaries ensure that beneficiaries are "free to trust" those caring for and supporting them.
- Boundaries at work help staff who are in a caring role to manage potential stress and to maintain their private lives.

The Essence of a Professional Caring Relationship

In every area of its ministry, Sharing Lives seeks to share the Love of Jesus with all those who come within the parameters of its work. The whole ethos of the Charity is to provide consistent, compassionate care, seeking to emulate in some way the Lord Jesus Christ. The Charity also seeks to care "for life", through a variety of projects, for those who are vulnerable and in need of long-term support.

The ethos of the Charity however also demands that relationships with those being supported and provided with care must similarly emulate Christ and must in every sense demonstrate the Charity's aim to treat every person with dignity and respect as a person made in the image of God. The manner in which staff members work must be above reproach, must not compromise the safety of all concerned and must therefore entail developing appropriate relationships with beneficiaries, which are therapeutic, safe and suitable for those working in a relationship of trust.

Procedures to Ensure Appropriate Boundaries are Maintained.

- Sharing Lives is providing care to very vulnerable persons and all those involved in providing care are thus in a position of power or influence over any beneficiary. This renders any sexual relationship between a beneficiary and a member of staff/volunteer/or other person working at a Sharing Lives facility unacceptable, as it would be a breach of a relationship of trust.
- It is essential to a relationship of trust that the staff member, volunteer, or other person working at a Sharing Lives facility does not cross the line of seeking to develop a relationship with a beneficiary which is in any sense in breach of the relationship of trust and also does not behave in a way that encourages beneficiaries to seek such a relationship with the staff member. A clear boundary must be maintained and it is not therefore normally appropriate for staff members to spend time with a beneficiary on a one to one basis out of normal working times and situations.
- Staff members should seek the advice of their line manager or the Sharing Lives trustees before engaging in any kind of socializing with those in the care of the Charity outside of normal working hours. Staff and volunteers will inevitably be invited to events such as parties and such events are extremely important to those in the care of the Charity, but staff should not attend one-on-one social events with someone in the care of the Charity and should seek the advice of their line manager for any event other than group activities officially organized as part of the Charity's care for beneficiaries.
- Staff should not visit beneficiaries of the Charity at times before 8am or after 7pm. This is a health and safety issue as well as an issue of boundaries.
- Similarly, staff should not as a general rule offer transport to beneficiaries outside of the above hours. This is a health and safety issue as well as a boundaries issue and advice must be sought from the staff member's line manager for any variation from this general rule.
- Staff should not give out his or her own or a colleague's private telephone number, address or email address to anyone in the care of the Charity. Neither should they disclose their own or others' health information or social details.
- Similarly, staff and volunteers should avoid accepting as friends on social media any beneficiaries, and should make sure that security settings are set so personal details are only available to those who they authorized.

- Please refer to the Code of Conduct with regard to financial issues or the borrowing or loaning of items between staff members and beneficiaries.

There may be specific circumstances which require some flexibility in relation to the above procedures. Such cases should be referred to the line manager or trustee for approval.

Conclusion

The relationship of staff members with those in the care of the Charity must always be a supportive one. It is vital that staff members recognise the imbalance of power that exists in a caring relationship, where the beneficiary is receiving support from the staff member and is thus to a degree dependent on that support.

Whilst every effort must always be made to ensure that there is no “them and us” at Sharing Lives and that every person is treated as an equal, whether a staff member, volunteer or beneficiary, every effort must also be made to ensure that there is never any kind of breach of the relationship of trust which exists in every caring role. Thus the maintaining of suitable and appropriate boundaries is crucial and mandatory for all those involved in Sharing Lives ministry.

This policy was agreed by the Sharing Lives Trustees at their meeting on 15th May 2023 and signed by Graeme Gentry, Trustee on their behalf.

Signed  ...
on behalf of Sharing Lives

This Policy will be reviewed by March 2026.