



inspiring the journey for
independence together

Personal Relationships at Work Policy

Non Statutory

Reviewed every three years

Signed By:

Review Date: September 2023

Date of next review: September 2026

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to all Rivermead Inclusive Trust staff regarding personal relationships within both our individual schools and across the Trust, in order to avoid any actual or potential conflicts of interest or misuse of authority.

The Rivermead Inclusive Trust values the diversity of its people and is committed to promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination. Therefore, staff will apply and operate this policy fairly and in doing so ensure that there is no discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, disability, age, religious or political belief, sexual orientation, trade union membership/activity or marital status.

2. Introduction

The Rivermead Inclusive Trust recognises the importance of preserving the integrity of professional relationships between members of staff as well as with consultants, contractors and/or suppliers. Whilst most social and personal relationships need not present a difficulty, and can be entirely beneficial in that they promote good working relationships, it is recognised that there will be particular circumstances where the staff member(s) concerned will need to withdraw from certain decisions or from undertaking certain roles, in order to protect themselves and the Trust from any possible criticism of unfair bias.

3. Definition of Related Person

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

- a family relationship;
- a business/commercial/financial relationship;
- a romantic/sexual relationship.

The above definitions are examples of personal relationships which may give rise to conflicts of interest in the workplace, however personal relationships are not restricted to these examples and anyone who considers that they are in a potential conflict of interest should declare it as outlined in the policy below.

4. Good Practice

Staff should conduct themselves at all times in ways that are consistent with their role and duties, and within all Rivermead Inclusive Trust policies (including those relating to equal opportunity, harassment and any codes of conduct outlined in the Trust Handbook). The recruitment, selection, treatment, development and promotion of staff should be based solely on evidence and not be in any way affected by personal relationships at work. Where personal relationships occur between members of staff, it is the responsibility of both individuals to avoid any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

5. Identifying and Declaring a Personal Relationship at Work

Staff should declare to their line manager or Executive Head, Head of School/Head Teacher any existing or new personal relationship they have with other members of staff, students, consultants, contractors, or suppliers which may give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest, trust or breach of confidentiality. The line manager or Executive Headteacher, Head of School/Head Teacher will treat these matters in confidence and in consultation with the member(s) of staff, find ways in which potential conflicts of interest can be avoided.

All declarations should be treated in confidence, recorded in writing and placed on the employees Personal File located within the main Trust building with the Trust HR Manager. Should there be any changes in the future, the member of staff should request that the document should be removed from the file and destroyed.

Staff who declare a personal relationship at work, should be treated fairly and with due regard to equality of treatment issues.

Staff who are uncertain about whether there is likely to be any risk of a potential conflict of interest emerging from a personal relationship at work, should discuss the matter with their line manager (or a manager higher within the management structure where the issue may involve the immediate line manager), Executive Headteacher, Head of School/Head Teacher or assigned Trustee in the first instance. Staff should approach their line manager in confidence should a relationship develop that may potentially contravene the principles of this policy.

Where either a personal relationship as defined above, or failure to comply with this policy (following investigation), results in an unfair advantage or disadvantage to either of the parties to the relationship the matter will be considered seriously by the Rivermead Inclusive Trust. This includes investigation of the above in accordance with the disciplinary procedures.

6. Personal Relationships at Work Involving a More Senior Role

In order to avoid any actual or potential conflict of interest, members of staff who are in a line management or supervisory role, or in a more senior position outside the immediate management structure (e.g. within a support service), should not be involved in:

- the Activity/Performance Review, promotion or discipline or any other management activity or process involving a member of staff with whom they have a declared personal relationship;
- the authorisation of any financial payments/decisions relating to financial matters e.g. fees payments, expense claims, salary changes or allocation of external funding for a member of staff with whom they have a declared personal relationship. However, if the person is the budget holder then they should see the financial transaction but have additional independent authorisation.

Members of staff, who are in a line management or supervisory role, or in a more senior position outside the immediate management structure, should not normally be involved in any way in the recruitment, selection or appointment of any applicant with whom they have a declared personal relationship. Where it is not practical to remove a member of staff from the recruitment process, all panel members should be made aware of the personal relationship and every panel decision should be justified as fair and equitable, without bias or conflict of interest.

If a member of staff believes that they may be personally adversely affected by a misuse of power/authority or conflict of interest, they should raise this with their manager and may raise the issue under the relevant Rivermead Inclusive Trust procedures. Please see Appendix 1 Guidance on Rivermead Inclusive Trust procedure raising concern about a personal relationship at work.

Where any member of staff feels that there is a possible or actual misuse of power/authority or conflict of interest relating to a personal relationship at work involving a line manager/supervisor, they should raise this in the first instance with the next higher level of the management structure.

Where there is evidence that a conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage may result from a personal relationship within a particular organisational structure, the manager to whom the personal relationship has been disclosed should discuss the issue with the Executive Headteacher, Head of School/ Head Teacher. The Head of School/ Head Teacher may wish to consider an alternative arrangement e.g. a change in reporting arrangements, or duties within a team; investigating one party being moved to another area of work or work location, if appropriate in the circumstances. They should consider all such matters in confidence and consult the staff involved and HR. In all instances any changes should be of equal status.

7. Personal Relationships at Work Not Involving a More Senior Role

Whilst the Rivermead Inclusive Trust is big enough to accommodate partners and family members working within its broad organisational and geographic spread, some regulation is necessary where such staff are brought into closer contact e.g. within the same location, or team.

In establishing whether there is a potential conflict of interest, managers may wish to consider the following:

- are any staff likely to be made uncomfortable in their dealings with either of the two staff members because of the existence of a known personal relationship?
- is a personal relationship seen to offer advantage to an employee and disadvantage to another by them feeling excluded from the relationship?
- is the relationship potentially interfering with the professional conduct of Trust business?
- is the relationship potentially having a negative effect on the workings of a team?

Where there is evidence that a conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage may occur as a result of staff with a personal relationship working within the same area, the manager to whom the personal relationship has been disclosed should discuss the issue with the Head of School/ Head Teacher. The Head of School/ Head Teacher may wish to consider an alternative arrangement, e.g. a change in reporting arrangements, or duties within a team; investigating one party being moved to another area of work or work location, if appropriate in the circumstances. They should consider all such matters in confidence and consult the staff involved and HR. In all instances any changes should be of equal status.

8. Personal Relationship at Work Involving a Staff Member and Student

The Rivermead Inclusive Trust regards it as the unquestionable responsibility of staff to recognise the professional and ethical responsibilities inherent in the staff/student relationship.

Where there is any family relationship between staff and student this should be declared to the line manager. The Head of School/ Head Teacher may wish to consider any necessary steps to facilitate the re-organisation of the member of staff's professional duties. They should consider all such matters in confidence and consult the staff involved and the relevant HR.

In the case of research students:

- no research student will be accepted for study under the supervision of a member of staff with whom a personal relationship exists; (See 2.1 for definition of a personal relationship)
- in a case where a close personal relationship develops between a research student and his/her supervisor after the commencement of study, the member of staff is required to declare it to his/her Head of Department/School, who is asked to make alternative supervision arrangements.

9. Recruitment and Selection

Any further information or advice on this process should be obtained from Karen Watkin HR manager in the first instance.

Last edited June 19th 2023