



Supporting Friendships Policy

Contents

Background to Policy	3
Policy	3
Procedures	3
Document Information.....	6
Amendment History	6

Fair Deal Supporting Friendships Policy

Background to Policy

Historically, Fair Deal has supported the friendships which can evolve between staff members and people who use our services. Moreover, Fair Deal believes in inclusion and is concerned by findings from psychological studies which have proven that being set apart and denied access to the lifestyles and opportunities that people without support needs take for granted causes low self esteem and can result in depression and psychological difficulties for people with learning disabilities. Consequently, when friendships have developed, the organisation has seen the value in supporting this.

However, Fair Deal is aware not only of the difficulties that can arise when dealing with relationships between staff and people who use our services that cross professional boundaries but of its duty to safeguard the interests and wellbeing of adults who are vulnerable and may be easy victims to unscrupulous staff members. Supporting friendships between staff members and people who use our services is an uncomfortable position to be in. On the one hand agencies with statutory responsibility warn us against sanctioning “unprofessional” relationships due to the potential risks to vulnerable user groups. On the other hand, those involved in the inclusion movement, for example O’Brien and Kinsella teach us about circles of support and utilising our own social networks. Indeed, within their application to tender for established and new services, the Glasgow City Council Adult Services ask us to evidence a shift away from paid support. We have found that interested staff members often have interested friends and family members who are keen to be involved socially with people using services. Clearly it is not in anyone’s best interests to curtail social opportunities arising from a work-based relationship between people who use our services and staff which develops beyond the limits of paid support. Fair Deal’s Board of Director’s recognise that in order to support genuine friendships a means to risk assess all such situations and develop a way of reducing risk and maintaining accountability, so that people using services are not exposed to unacceptable risks, must be developed.

Policy

It is Fair Deal’s policy to support friendships which develop between people who use our services and staff only if the following procedures are adhered to.

Procedures

- The Team Leader or in the case of senior members of staff the line manager or chair of the board must be made aware of the friendship
- The friendship must be recorded in the Person-Centred Support Plan so as to be open to scrutiny from people we support, their family members, care managers, advocates and monitoring bodies
- Visits to the home of staff members must be discussed with the line manager in advance. The line manager will give careful consideration to such a request and will either authorise this or not. Decisions reached by the line manager will be based on factors like the length of time that the employee has been with the organisation, the line manager’s assessment of the relationship between the worker and the person who uses our services, the persons wishes in relation to the home visit, who else is likely to be at home etc. If line managers do not authorise the home visit the worker must abide by this decision. Line managers will in usual circumstances be prepared

to give reasons for their decision. Failure to comply with the line manager's decision will result in disciplinary action

- Contact with people who use our services in workers own time, for example trips to the cinema or meeting for coffee, must be discussed in advance and similarly authorised by the line manager
- Contact/time spent out-with workers paid hours must be recorded in the persons diary, logbook or communication book
- During this time workers are responsible for ensuring that the persons support needs are met to the same degree that they are responsible and accountable in paid time. Workers should bear this in mind when engaging in any new activity or social situation. New situations for people who use our services still require to be risk assessed

Team Leaders must assess and monitor any friendships carefully. Prior to sanctioning contact out with work hours or visits to the support workers home which could take place within work time, the team leader must assess if the workers interest is genuine or not. S/he should therefore do the following:

- Talk to the person who uses our services to gain his/her perception of the relationship
- Check if the visits to the staff members home always take place in work time
- Whose idea is the activity/visit? Is it the person who uses our services or the staff members
- Find out what the person is doing when s/he visits the worker's home
- Monitor use of cars as opposed to public transport & cost of this to the person who uses our services
- Give consideration to how much the care manager or carer requires to be involved in authorising contact/visits. This will depend on level of autonomy enjoyed by the person
- Monitor the costs incurred by the person who uses our services
- Monitor recordings in diaries and logbooks
- Is the worker behaving responsibly, have they all the information they require to support the person safely, If, medication is required have they organised this?
- Ensure that the staff member is aware that they are as accountable and responsible as they would be whilst on shift and that this is recorded within support & supervision notes

This policy is about friendships between people who use Fair Deal's services and people who Fair Deal contract with to provide support. There may be instances where members of support staff's family or friends develop friendships, engage in regular or occasional social activities with people we support or where the relationship is more formalised, and the family member or friend is part of the persons circle of support.

The procedures in respect of recording and monitoring by team leaders outlined in this paper should be followed in order to balance the opportunity to develop a full and varied social life with the potential risks posed to vulnerable adults. If procedures are followed in respect of recording, assessing, monitoring and public scrutiny the risks posed to vulnerable adults are quantifiable and Fair Deal is able to afford people opportunities to develop full and rewarding social lives and move away from paid support.

Ex Employees and in general:

The process outlined in this policy will also be applied to ex-employees who may wish to continue to have a friendship with someone they have supported, it is important people are aware of their responsibilities and also the organisations. In more general terms if someone is keen to befriend someone, we support who does not have the capacity to make this choice then we would advise people to go through the befriending route or apply the procedures in this policy.

Document Information

Document Ref:	Supporting Friendships Policy
Version:	2
Date of Version:	17/05/2019
Created By:	Clare Houston
Approved By:	Ann Marie Docherty
Confidentiality Level:	Controlled: Uncontrolled if printed

Amendment History

Date	Version	Created By	Description of Change
17/05/2019	2	Elaine Davidson	Added Front Cover and amended Footer