



Altrum
Rights, Relationships and Professional Boundaries Policy
2016



Altrum

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More information about Altrum and its member organisations can be found at www.altrum.org

Foreword

The signatories to this policy recognise that all citizens have gifts, skills and contributions to make, and that many of these contributions find their expression in the context of relationships. Unpaid relationships, such as relative, neighbour and friend, are crucial for the health and wellbeing of individuals and of communities.

Altrum member organisations support many people who experience prejudice and discrimination that can lead to social isolation, which is both unjust and harmful to health and quality of life. Their support therefore includes efforts to assist people who wish to create, maintain and where necessary repair or even end particular unpaid relationships.

All social relationships contain a mixture of helpful and harmful aspects and so have the potential to both enrich and hurt those who engage in them, often at the same time. Altrum members therefore support people to develop their skill in navigating the ever-changing blend of delight and dullness, opportunities and risks that are common to all relationships.

This policy is rooted in a human rights approach, drawing on the aspirations articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)¹, the legal framework of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)² and making a practical reality of the Scottish Government PANEL principles³.

At the heart of this policy lies a twin acknowledgement that, first, people have the right to reach out to others and seek the relationships that they want, and that, secondly, communities are stronger when they are diverse and every citizen is contributing to them within the framework of the law.

This policy and the accompanying guidance notes are enabling documents. They should be used in conjunction with the Altrum Sexuality Policy and the person centred practices and safeguarding procedures established within each Altrum organisation.

The thinking behind this document was undertaken by the Altrum Relationships and Professional Boundaries Working Group. Altrum is a federation of like-minded organisations and individuals committed to the promotion of the values of inclusion and social justice. The lead organisation for this work was C-Change Scotland (www.c-change.org.uk), contact info@c-change.org.uk.

Peter Bates (www.peterbates.org.uk) collated output from the group and worked alongside Sam Smith (sam.smith@c-change.org.uk) to draft the text.

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¹ www.scottishhumanrights.com/careaboutrights/whatisahumanrightsbasedapproach

² Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights, as amended) (ECHR)

³ The United Nations. "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities." Treaty Series 2515 (2006): 3.

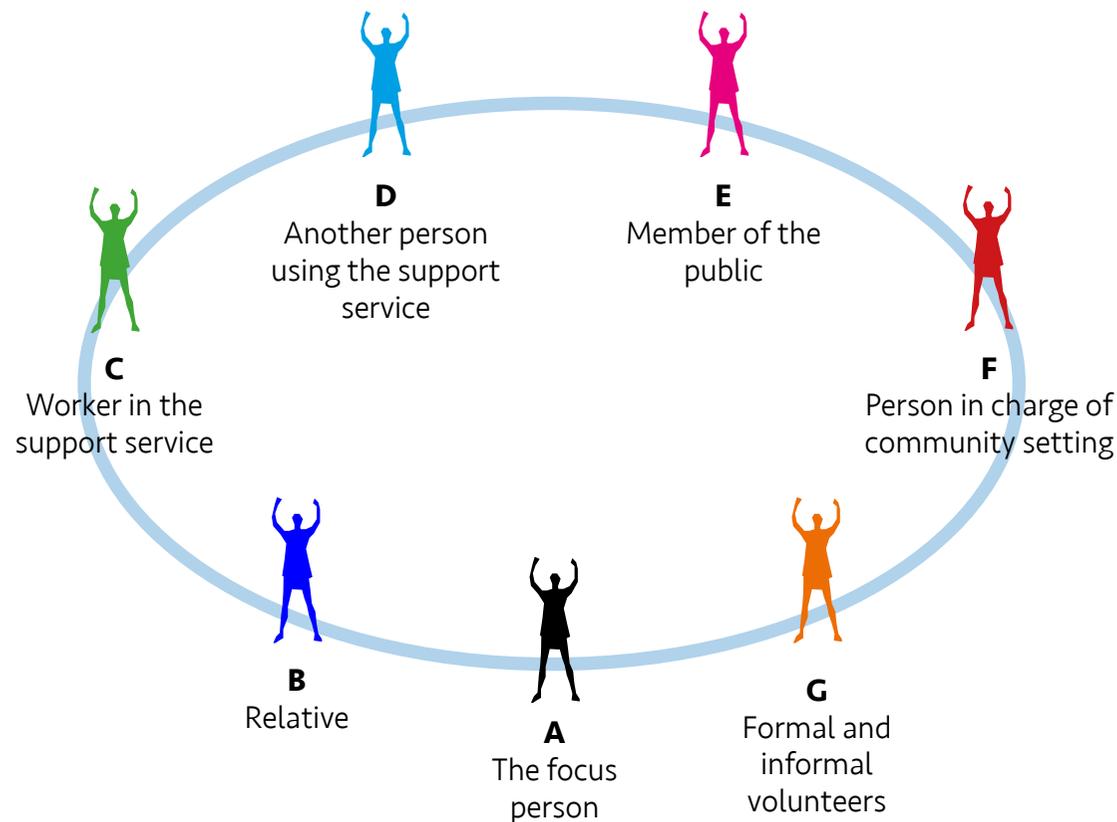
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1. Policy statement

- This policy is intended to help staff to make considered and appropriate decisions about the relationships the people they support have with both them and other members of the community.
- Here you will find outlined the standards we require staff to observe when supporting the people they work with to develop healthy, fulfilling relationships. The policy also outlines the circumstances in which your employing organisation will monitor your practice and the actions that will be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.
- This policy should be read alongside the Altrium Sexuality Policy and your organisation's Adults Support and Protection policy and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Codes of Practice for Social Care Workers.⁴ It has a particular focus on unpaid social relationships with members of the public, such as neighbours, acquaintances, friends, associates and colleagues.
- This policy does not form part of any contract of employment and can be amended at any time.



2. Who is covered by the policy

- 2.1 This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including senior managers, officers, directors, consultants, contractors, trainees, homeworkers, part-time and fixed term employees, casual and agency staff, students and volunteers (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).
- 2.2 Whilst all kinds of relationships are informed by this policy, a particular focus is on the relationships shown as AE in the diagram above.

3. The scope of the policy

- 3.1 All staff are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the wellbeing, safety, privacy, confidentiality and interests of the people who use our services, our employees, our services, our organisations and our partners.
- 3.2 Breaches of this policy may be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure within each Altrum organisation and in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to dismissal.

4. Responsibility for implementation of the policy

- 4.1 A named individual within each Altrum organisation has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- 4.2 The Altrum Rights, Relationships, and Professional Boundaries sub group is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this and making recommendations for changes to minimize the risks to Altrum organisations.
- 4.3 All staff are responsible for their compliance with this policy and for ensuring that it is consistently applied. All staff should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it.
- 4.4 Questions regarding the content of the policy should be directed to info@c-change.org.uk. However, it is acknowledged that respectful and empowering relationships do not tend to form in a rule-bound environment, but rather flourish in a context where people have permission to express their individuality, respond to the moment and take some positive risks in personal disclosure and trust, within the framework of the law. As such, what is required is an accountable yet sophisticated approach that responds to individual circumstances, while clinging doggedly to the values of respect, empowerment and dignity.

5. Using the Altrum Rights, Relationships and Professional Boundaries policy

- 5.1 This short statement on Rights, Relationships and Professional Boundaries policy should be read in conjunction with the **Relationship Worksheets** that address particular themes. From time to time, new or revised **Relationship Worksheets** may be issued to address new topics or pool new insights.

6. General principles

6.1 As a staff member, there will be many occasions when you have to make a judgement that relates to the area of social relationships. The following six questions should inform your decision making.

1. What values shape our understanding?

Values come first, because they guide what you see as well as what you do. Values help to set our goals and clarify what we are working towards. We commit to person-centred, creative, empowered, inclusive and safe approaches.

2. What does the law, evidence, professional guidance and your employer say on the matter?

Whatever your personal feelings, your practice must reflect a human rights based approach, abide by the law, take note of the evidence, heed the guidance of professional bodies, align with the approach taken by your employer and fulfil the expectations of the commissioner of your service.

3. How can you work in a person-centred way to expand life chances for the person whilst keeping everyone safe?

Social relationships are a key aspect of quality of life, and Altrum members are committed to supporting people in this aspect of community life. Rather than attempting to keep people safe by denying them opportunities, Altrum members weave a relentless commitment to safeguarding into these positive life opportunities. They support the person to decide what kind of life they want and direct their own support as far as possible to move towards realising these ambitions. This means that occasionally things might go wrong in small ways, as people sometimes make unwise decisions or take positive risks that fail.

4. How would you know if things are going wrong, and what would you do?

Since all social relationships have the potential to go wrong, both staff and the person remain vigilant and put things right at the earliest possible moment. While 'mate crime'⁵ is a reality, and some people are abused via their social relationships, people are not usually safer if they are isolated. The solution to bad mates is not to be lonely, but to have good mates.

5. How will you look after yourself?

While social relationships are built on personal disclosure and shared activities, it is helpful to maintain a boundary between the 'personal' and the 'private'. Staff need time off and supportive social networks that are separate from the workplace. In the event of challenge, you need to be able to point to written records that show you have thought carefully, consulted with colleagues and acted in the best interests of the people you support.

6. How are your work colleagues and your line manager involved?

A frequent warning sign of trouble is where staff begin to be secretive about their work, and become unwilling to share what they are actually doing with their colleagues or line manager. You need to be open and honest about your work, and managers to be on hand as curious listeners, eager to hear what is really happening in the lives of the people you are paid to support. Accountable relationships and accurate, evidence-based recording is crucial, alongside support for the person to enjoy a private life.

⁵ Thomas, Pam. "'Mate crime': ridicule, hostility and targeted attacks against disabled people." *Disability & Society* 26.1 (2011): 107-111. Andrew Landman, Roderick. "'A counterfeit friendship': mate crime and people with learning disabilities." *The Journal of Adult Protection* 16.6 (2014): 355-366.

- 6.2 The **Relationship Worksheets** show how these six fundamental questions work out in practice. They do not address every situation that might arise, but illustrate how the six principles can be used in specific areas. Staff need to think creatively and sometimes consult widely regarding the person they support and the particular situation they find themselves in before coming to a judgement about what to do⁶.
- 6.3 Some material, such as references to the European Convention on Human Rights, could be written into every **Relationship Worksheet**, but this would make the document very long and repetitious. Consequently, these things are mentioned only once. You therefore need to consider the whole suite of documents, and consider how these issues overlap and influence one another, rather than taking a narrow, mechanistic view of one particular issue.

7. A different kind of policy

- 7.1 This policy document is rather different from the statements set out by some other organisations. Traditional approaches remain silent on people's human rights, ignore the positive potential of community participation, stop good things happening in a mistaken attempt to stop bad things happening, and pay insufficient attention to self-directed support arrangements. In contrast, while this policy is implacable in its opposition to the abuse of power, it insists that the people we support should have maximum choice and control of their own lives and a place in the wider community; and that staff should make an appropriate contribution to supporting people to form and maintain relationships with members of the general public.
- 7.2 In fearlessly bringing the evidence on harassment and abuse alongside the data on exclusion and inclusion, Altrum members reject the illusion that people can be kept safe by denying them opportunities, and insist that safeguarding should be woven into the fabric that supports people as citizens to participate in community life. The **Relationship Worksheets** contain several references to these traditional approaches, to show how some services, colleagues and commissioners may view the world, but strides forward into a more evidence-based, holistic, respectful and human rights based approach. While some prefer the simplicity of blanket prohibitions to our demand for ethical agility, integrity and individualised support, we hope that others will join us on this exciting journey. It is the only path to full citizenship, inclusion and human rights for all.

8. Review of this policy

- 8.1 The Altrum Relationships and Professional Boundaries Working Group will consult with stakeholders and review this policy from time to time.

⁶ "Bullet points of prohibitions, warnings and injunctions can grow like topsy, but it is unlikely that when a transgression occurs it is the result of a missing bullet point." (Doel M, Allmark P, Conway P, Cowburn M, Flynn M, Nelson P & Tod A (2009) Professional boundaries research report Centre for Health and Social Care Research, Sheffield Hallam University., section 1.3). "A technical, non-contextualised application of boundary rules may morally impoverish the workforce." as mindless compliance replaces a rigorous analysis of ethics. (Freud S and Krug S (2002) Beyond the code of ethics, Part II: dual relationships revisited. Families in Society Vol 83, number 5/6, pp483-492)

Relationship Worksheet 1: Understanding Friendship and Social Relationships

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in Understanding Friendship and Social Relationships
1	What values shape our understanding?	Altrum members need to create the best possible chance for the people they support to establish natural relationships and friendships with other people in the community beyond services ⁷ . These natural connections ⁸ are not limited by professional obligations, are two-way transactions for mutual enjoyment, and may provide lifelong social connections. The twin aims are for the person to have choice and control, and for our communities to include everyone. We hope that unpaid, natural, mutual supports will gradually replace one-way staff supports.
2	What does the law, evidence, professional guidance and your employer say on the matter?	People have the right to live their life in the community free of surveillance and interference ⁹ , and this includes people's right to visit one another in their homes. Loneliness is a source of deep distress and this increases the risk of harassment and violence ¹⁰ . The threat of abuse should not be used to deny people community opportunities. Support must be offered in a manner that is the least restrictive of the person's freedom ¹¹ . You must not form inappropriate relationships ¹² . Loneliness and social isolation also has significant health implications. ¹³
3	How can you work in a person-centred way to expand life chances for the person whilst keeping everyone safe?	Some people appear to prefer just one or two friends rather than a large social circle. Staff need to take care that they do not assume that the person they support wants a life like their own, whether extrovert and sociable or introvert and largely solitary. If a friend or relative is recruited to provide paid help, then this may permanently change the relationship. It can secure the relationship (such as payments that enable foster care) or destroy the friendship as the threads of mutual attraction break under the contractual obligations.
4	How would you know if things are going wrong, and what would you do?	Check if people want more connections than they appear to ask for. Where people are receiving intimate care they may restore their privacy by engaging strangers to do these tasks or remaining aloof. Where harm is suspected, staff have a duty of care and must report it to the local authority as an Adult Protection Issue or to the police if a hate or other crime is suspected.

⁷ Our understanding of community has much in common with Asset-Based Community Development – see <http://www.altogetherbetter.org.uk/Data/Sites/1/5-assetbasedcommunitydevelopment.pdf> and also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwA02v9gfOc>.

⁸ Spencer L & Pahl R (2006) *Rethinking Friendship: Hidden Solidarities Today* Princeton: Princeton University Press

⁹ Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

¹⁰ EHRC (2011) *Hidden in plain sight: inquiry into disability-related harassment*. London: Equality and Human Rights Commission. Research on hate crimes against people with disabilities makes a very powerful plea for community empowerment to have a safeguarding focus integrated within it. (Learning disability hate crime: Good practice guidance for Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Learning Disability Partnership Boards Home Office 2008). Also Carwyn Gravell (2012) *Loneliness and Cruelty* London: Lemos & Crane. Available at <http://esmefairbairn.org.uk/uploads/documents/Publications/loneliness+cruelty.pdf>

¹¹ Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007. See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2007/10/section/1>

¹² <http://www.sssc.uk.com/about-the-sssc/multimedia-library/publications/1020-sssc-codes-of-practice-for-social-service-workers-and-employers/download>

¹³ The Healthcare Quality Strategy for NHS Scotland-putting people at the heart of our NHS. Scottish Government, 2010 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/05/10102307/>

Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in Understanding Friendship and Social Relationships
5 How will you look after yourself?	<p>Your priority should always be the person you are supporting, so it is never appropriate to make changes in order to suit your own preferences.¹⁴ For example, trading duties with colleagues in order to spend time with a particular person would suggest favouritism.</p> <p>You may have provided invaluable support through difficult times and become a trusted figure in the person's life. This feels good, so keep in mind that a staff member cannot be a friend. A friendship is a very specific relationship that does not involve payment. You can be friendly and professional - however, it is important to recognise and honour the specific nature of a paid and unpaid relationship. You may seek to build your personal friendship network so that you do not 'need' friendship at work¹⁵ and consider how the policy on sexual relationships¹⁶ informs your approach to social relationships.</p> <p>If you support unpopular people you may find that your own social status is diminished (Pugh 2007). If you are obliged to take unwanted action, then the person may use their community links to tarnish your reputation.¹⁷</p>
6 How are your work colleagues and your line manager involved?	<p>It may be difficult matter to challenge other people about their friendships and social relationships, especially when this is based on a vague sense of concern, rather than a specific incident. Staff have an obligation to be honest and transparent in their work, willing to give an account of delicate moments when they felt they blurred the boundary of safe and constructive relationships. Creative and spontaneous work will always involve an element of risk that one might 'step over the line', and so managers need to create a learning culture where people feel safe and able to share the realities of life on the frontline. It is important if you are in doubt or unsure of a situation you speak to a peer or your line manager.</p>

14 CHRE 2008b

15 Brodsky's research (quoted in Reamer 2003) found that lonely therapists were more likely to be caught up in sexual misconduct with their clients. Reamer FG (2003) Boundary issues in social work: managing dual relationships Social Work vol. 48, No 1 pp121-133.

16 The Sexual Offences Act (2003) sections 38-41 creates specific offences for a care worker that engages in sexual activity with a mentally disordered person who receives care in the setting where they work, with a maximum sentence of 14 years' imprisonment.

17 BACP 2004, Syme 2003

Relationship Worksheet 2: Relationships between people who use services

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in Working with Relationships Between People who use Services
1	What values shape our understanding?	Sometimes the person being supported by the service offers friendship to another person who uses the service. People may get together to celebrate, raise a complaint, identify a common theme affecting their lives or mentor one another.
2	What does the law, evidence, professional guidance and your employer say on the matter?	Peer support brings empowerment, solidarity and hope. Sometimes friends deliver outcomes that are at least as good as those delivered by paid staff, reduce public expenditure and increase community resilience ¹⁸ . Through becoming a friend, people recognise their own value. Friendship enhances quality of life, wellbeing and resilience, providing a vital buffer against adversity. ¹⁹
3	How can you work in a person-centred way to expand life chances for the person whilst keeping everyone safe?	<p>Relatives and staff who spend the most time with the person may have the best insight into how they can be a friend to someone else, and how to overcome any difficulties that arise. Staff should find out whether the friends want them to be present during the meeting and promote independent friendship wherever possible.</p> <p>When one person using the service visits another in their home, staff can support the friends to make and share their plans, arrange transport and prepare hospitality. If one friend has independent travel skills, he or she may act as a travel buddy and widen opportunities for both.</p>
4	How would you know if things are going wrong, and what would you do?	<p>From time to time, staff may need to challenge prejudice and stereotypes that suggest that people being supported cannot be a good friend, or that someone who has had a difficult social relationship in the past will always repeat the same pattern in the future.</p> <p>Where two people receiving support are accompanied by staff, there is always a danger that the relationship between the support staff will dominate the social space. Staff need to plan together how they can fade into the background and give the people themselves space to develop their relationship with a degree of privacy.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to the need for PVG checks²⁰ and the risks of mate crime. Sometimes it is necessary to remain within earshot of the meeting, be available to call as needed, or to carry out discrete checks that all is well, but this must be based on a specific assessment, rather than generalised anxiety or suspicion. If in doubt speak to the person you support, a peer or your line manager if you have genuine concerns.</p>

¹⁸ <https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=bfdc0e86-918b-45fa-bb-dd-8c7b67ee17c3>

¹⁹ www.disabilityrightsuk.org/sites/default/files/word/Peersupportandpersonalisation.do

²⁰ In Scotland, Disclosure Scotland (<http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/>) has placed the formal criminal records check into a wider obligation to assess and manage risk, thereby setting any criminal record in context and restoring the potential to take a person-centred and context specific approach

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in Working with Relationships Between People who use Services
5	How will you look after yourself?	Creating space for positive friendship to grow between people using the service is often a matter of stepping back after careful thought and consideration of any risks. It requires staff to set aside any feelings that they need to be the one with the close, trusted relationship with the person, so that the person can develop other connections. When relationships go through difficult times, staff need to be on hand to offer emotional support whilst steadfastly refusing any desire to 'fix' things for the people concerned.
6	How are your work colleagues and your line manager involved?	You may want to test out the plan with colleagues, especially when a significant new step is taken. Keep a record of the reasons for your actions to show how you have supported opportunity while minimising risk. Where possible this information should be recorded in the individuals care plan or working policy.

Relationship Worksheet 3: Visiting Staff Homes

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in thinking about Visiting Staff Homes
1	What values shape our understanding?	<p>It is natural for people to want to see where their friends live, and offering hospitality to guests in one’s own home is an honoured and ancient tradition in many cultures. Staff should support people to build informal friendships with members of the public that provide for these exchanges.</p> <p>Home is the place where we get to choose who enters, and this sense of control should be upheld wherever possible²¹. Letting someone see your home is a moment of vulnerability and self-disclosure, just like telling someone about yourself²².</p>
2	What does the law, evidence, professional guidance and your employer say on the matter?	<p>People using the service must not visit staff’s own home²³ or that of their relatives or personal friends unless this is an agreed part of the person’s support plan.</p>
3	How can you work in a person-centred way to expand life chances for the person whilst keeping everyone safe?	<p>Some people, especially those who have never experienced family life, would like to be invited to a friend’s home. An interim step might be for a worker to offer this experience via a Shared Lives scheme²⁴ or through attendance at a wedding, in order to create new community connections and shared interests²⁵.</p> <p>The worker’s home is not overseen by others, and so there may be a greater risk of unacceptable conduct in private. Risk varies with location, time and activities too, as helping in the bathroom is potentially more intimate and therefore riskier than helping in the kitchen. Staying overnight may be perceived as riskier than a daytime visit, and attending a party with alcohol may be considered riskier than attending a planning meeting.</p>
4	How would you know if things are going wrong, and what would you do?	<p>If you have a prior personal connection with a person you now support, you need to inform your line manager and discuss the best way forward.</p> <p>If you need to call in at your own home during working hours (for example to check on a sick relative) then you need to negotiate permission with your line manager. The person you support will not normally make the visit with you as the visit is about your needs, not theirs.</p> <p>A visit to the worker’s home can create a demand for further visits. Moreover, a worker’s home may not be a safe environment or the circumstance of others in the home may make the visit unwise.</p>

21 As the home could be a place where staff needs dominate, CHRE advised that visiting a patient’s home unannounced and without a prior commitment, ‘while not necessarily constituting a breach of sexual boundaries, may be a precursor to displaying sexualised behaviour towards patients.’ Commission for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (2008) Learning about sexual boundaries between healthcare professionals and patients: a report on education and training. London: CHRE.

22 Self-disclosure helps to make the contact authentic and reduce power differences between the worker and the person being supported.

23 See <http://www.hpc-uk.org/complaints/hearings/index.asp?id=5917&showAll=>

24 In these approaches, staff are employed to offer short breaks, either in the daytime or overnight, in their own home. See <http://sharedlivesplus.org.uk/>.

25 Reamer FG (2012) Boundary Issues and Dual Relationships in the Human Services New York: Colombia University Press.

Reamer FG (2012).

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in thinking about Visiting Staff Homes
5	How will you look after yourself?	If the worker begins to feel that they are the only one who can support the person effectively, then this is a warning sign that unhealthy dependency is being formed. Staff should not feel obliged to invite individuals to their homes if they are not comfortable about doing so.
6	How are your work colleagues and your line manager involved?	The proposed visit should be discussed with the person themselves, colleagues and the manager and the reasons for selecting this home rather than another venue should be clearly in the best interests of the person being supported. Arrangements must be recorded and regularly reviewed to ensure it promotes the person's independence and inclusion in the wider community.

Relationship Worksheet 4: Gifts

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in thinking about the impact of Gifts on Relationships
1	What values shape our understanding?	Some people find joy in being able to thank people who support them by giving a small gift. In some cultures, offering gifts to one another is a core social norm. Refusal of a gift is a breach of social rules, which can be dehumanising ²⁶ and upsetting, even when we understand the reasons.
2	What does the law, evidence, professional guidance and your employer say on the matter?	Staff must not enter into any financial transactions with the people they support such as buying things from them, selling to them, bartering or exchanging goods or services. Lending or borrowing should be treated with caution and discussed with colleagues. Staff must not agree to hold banking PIN numbers, or become trustees, beneficiaries or executors in relation to the wills of people using the service or their relatives. Staff should not generally buy substantial gifts for people they support, as it could be construed as creating an inappropriate relationship ²⁷ . Self-directed support creates new opportunities for financial abuse by staff ²⁸ , so vigilance is needed.
3	How can you work in a person-centred way to expand life chances for the person whilst keeping everyone safe?	Families and social groups often have their own culture and tradition in relation to gifts. Some families bring gifts home from holidays; others take a gift whenever they visit each other's homes, and shopping trips include small exchanges of gifts as people buy one another sweets or coffee. If the person is supported by workers from different organisations, try to harmonise your response to gift-giving, or the person may be confused by the different responses they get.
4	How would you know if things are going wrong, and what would you do?	Workers should consider why the individual is giving the gift to a paid person rather than an unpaid friend. Some people are so eager to give gifts that they use money that should be spent on other things. We should not assume that the people we support are unable to differentiate and understand the boundaries of a professional relationship. Some gifts may be loaded with additional meaning, such as a small gift given on Valentine's Day ²⁹ . The gift or sequence of gifts may lead the giver or the receiver to believe that something is owed in exchange ³⁰ . It may stimulate favouritism ³¹ or inhibit essential but uncomfortable conversations or actions with the person.

26 Clients may be harmed if their well-intentioned gifts are refused by workers that they hold in high esteem. Refusing may be as rejecting as outright stating to the person 'You have nothing of value to offer this relationship'. Quoted in Sherratt, S., & Hersh, D. J. (2010). "You feel like family..." Professional boundaries and social model aphasia groups. *International Journal of Speech Language Pathology*, 12(2), 152-161.

27 See, for example, <http://www.hpc-uk.org/complaints/hearings/index.asp?id=6582&showAll=1>

28 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305404972_Do_personal_budgets_increase_the_risk_of_abuse_Evidence_from_English_national_data

29 Walker and Clark (1999) quoted in Parkes N & Jukes M (2008) Professional boundaries in a person-centred paradigm *British Journal of Nursing* vol. 17, no 21, 1358-136

30 'Gift exchange is an intimate gesture'. Reamer FG (2003) Boundary issues in social work: managing dual relationships *Social Work* vol. 48, No 1 pp121-133.

31 Nurses must 'refuse any gifts, favours or hospitality that might be interpreted as an attempt to gain preferential treatment.' <https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/nmc-publications/nmc-code.pdf>

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in thinking about the impact of Gifts on Relationships
5	How will you look after yourself?	Some of the people we support enjoy giving gifts so staff should discuss with the person what is seen as an acceptable gift.
6	How are your work colleagues and your line manager involved?	<p>Some organisations leave it to individual employees to decide what gifts they can give or receive, while others have set a ceiling on the number of gifts or their cash value – in order to set a ceiling on the value of gifts that can be given to a person being supported or received from them. Gifts should always be reported to the manager and gifts may be received by staff on behalf of the team, rather than to the particular individual concerned.</p> <p>Employees should always refer to and follow their own organisations gift policy.</p>

Relationship Worksheet 5: Touch

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in thinking about the impact of Touch on Relationships
1	What values shape our understanding?	Voluntary touch is a profound human need that is largely met outside of paid relationships and by people who are comfortable with the contact. People greet each other with a high five, hold someone who is upset; congratulate the winner with a handshake. Such gestures are often unplanned responses to the moment, and lose their potency and value if over-regulated. Cultures vary in the ways people touch each other in greeting, respect, friendship and love. Deprivation of affectionate touch is harmful to general health, happiness and social support ³² . When spontaneous gestures of human warmth are smothered by fearful regulation, support becomes dehumanising, mechanistic and restricted.
2	What does the law, evidence, professional guidance and your employer say on the matter?	Despite the fact that touch is an essential part of caring work, it is often considered to be risky ³³ . For example, physiotherapists frequently develop a close relationship with their patients, suggesting a complex interplay between touch and relationship building. ³⁴
3	How can you work in a person-centred way to expand life chances for the person whilst keeping everyone safe?	We need to consider touch on an individual basis which takes account of people's differing views on hugging and touch. ³⁵
4	How would you know if things are going wrong, and what would you do?	Touch can be intrusive and violent, inappropriately sexual or simply unwanted, as we all vary in our need for private space. Some services are so fearful of bad touch that they deprive people of good touch. While one person in the social relationship may consider the touch to be innocent, the other may consider it to be inappropriate, abusive or manipulative, especially in our sexualised culture. Staff should reflect on their conduct to ensure that the person being supported has choice and control, and actions taken are in the best interests of the person, rather than meeting the worker's needs.

32 Floyd K (2014) Relational and Health Correlates of Affection Deprivation Western Journal of Communication Volume 78, Issue 4, pp 383-403. DOI:10.1080/10570314.2014.927071.

33 In May 2016, a social worker was struck off for misconduct that included hugging a client – see <http://www.hpc-uk.org/complaints/hearings/archive/index.asp?id=6835>.

34 Cooper I & Jenkins S (2008) Sexual boundaries between physiotherapists and patients are not perceived clearly: an observational study Australian Journal of Physiotherapy Vol 54 pp 275-279.

35 Ethics of touch: Establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries in service to people with developmental disabilities

Harber, Mary, Hingsburger, David. Eastman, QC: Diverse City Press, 1998.

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in thinking about the impact of Touch on Relationships
5	How will you look after yourself?	<p>Some staff employ two or three different hugs – one type for their partner, another for friends and a third, which mostly involves holding the elbows of the person, for the people they support.</p> <p>Staff should be comfortable explaining their personal boundaries around touch.</p> <p>In performing intimate tasks, the appropriate protective clothing should be worn. An agreed procedure should be in place and written into the person’s support plan. This may include approaches such as ‘hand over hand’ where the person is supported to do the task for themselves by the worker touching the person’s hand rather than more intimate parts of their body.</p>
6	How are your work colleagues and your line manager involved?	<p>Where there are concerns or risk areas around hugging and touch this should be discussed with the person being supported, multi-agency colleagues and written into the person’s support plan.</p> <p>Good touch is acceptable, if it is comfortable for both parties. Different people will need individual arrangements, rather than a single rule for all, as some people do not want any kind of touch, even on a special occasion. You need to be aware of what is appropriate for each person.</p> <p>Some of the people you support may need help to learn about appropriate touch and how to respect other people’s personal space. This is vital, as inappropriate touch can do real damage to the person’s opportunities for building positive friendships in the wider community.</p>

Relationship Worksheet 6: Off Duty

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in thinking about Relationships when Off Duty
1	What values shape our understanding?	All citizens, including staff and the people they support, occupy multiple, interconnecting and overlapping roles which cannot be effectively managed by denial and prohibition. Staff work towards inclusion by promoting opportunities for the person to build friendships and positive roles in the wider community. As others are drawn in, the worker becomes less significant in the life of the person. Taking time off reminds staff that they are not indispensable in the life of the person. Teaching turn-taking and other friendship skills will support the person to utilise these skills in an unpaid friendship with someone who chooses to keep company with them ³⁶ .
2	What does the law, evidence, professional guidance and your employer say on the matter?	Organisations have a legal duty to ensure that employees have appropriate time away from their work ³⁷ and they should seek to honour and preserve this time. Off-duty staff represent their employer and have an on-going duty of care. "You must uphold public trust and confidence in social services whether you are in work or outside of work" ³⁸ . The more direct involvement a worker has with a supported person the greater clarity is required regarding the nature of off-duty contact. For example, a Board member who does not routinely see the person and has minimal influence over their life would require no less integrity but be subject to less scrutiny than a member of their direct support team.
3	How can you work in a person-centred way to expand life chances for the person whilst keeping everyone safe?	Consider the level of intimacy in the setting. A one-to-one in the person's home is more intimate than attending an activity in a group, as is watching TV together compared with attending a concert. The goal is generally to broaden the person's network of social roles and relationships, rather than concentrate power and influence on the paid staff, so consider whether the activity could be supported by an unpaid person. If the off-duty worker does facilitate access to the community facility, they need to work towards the replacement of the support they provide whilst off duty with support that is provided by people who have absolutely no paid relationship to the person.
4	How would you know if things are going wrong, and what would you do?	Test out your plans by asking yourself the following questions: Does this action align with the concept of self-directed support? How will I feel if my action becomes known to my boss, the inspection agency or the newspaper? Have I acted with decency, dignity and respect towards the person? How will I feel if this is the last thing I do in connection with the person? Does the person or their advocate consider this to be a positive action, designed to promote their best interests? Would this be acceptable if it was done to me or my loved ones? Am I supporting the development of natural friendships in the community or replacing them?

36 Great care is needed here to ensure that such turn-taking does not become self-indulgent for the worker or exploit the person being supported.

37 <https://www.gov.uk/maximum-weekly-working-hours/overview>

38 <http://www.sssc.uk.com/about-the-sssc/multimedia-library/publications/1020-sssc-codes-of-practice-for-social-service-workers-and-employers/download>. For evidence of breaches of this expectation, see <http://www.hpc-uk.org/complaints/hearings/archive/index.asp?id=6901> and <http://www.hpc-uk.org/complaints/hearings/index.asp?id=6576&showAll=1>

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in thinking about Relationships when Off Duty
5	How will you look after yourself?	It is neither an obligation nor an expectation laid on a worker to undertake any activity with the person they support outside their contracted hours. However, if a worker should choose to spend time with the person they support out with their contracted hours this should be an agreed part of the support plan, aligned with the person's goals. The worker also has a right to privacy and should be able to have a personal life that is free from scrutiny by their employer. The worker is entitled to take time off from work ³⁹ , and so may prefer to not have contact with the person they support when off duty, by offering a brief acknowledgement and then moving away, in the same way as one might greet a work colleague.
6	How are your work colleagues and your line manager involved?	Your line manager and colleagues in the support team for the person should know if you are frequently in contact with someone you support outside of work hours (such as both belonging to the same football supporters club). You should agree how you balance the person's right to privacy ⁴⁰ with a sound 'need to know' principle so that the goals of the support plan are advanced while the person is free from unnecessary surveillance in the community.

39 Sonnentag S (2012) Psychological Detachment from Work During Leisure Time: The Benefits of Mentally Disengaging from Work Current Directions in Psychological Science. DOI: 10.1177/0963721411434979.

40 Upheld in article 22 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. See <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/united-nations-convention-rights-people-disabilities-equality-and-human-rights>.

Relationship Worksheet 7: Unplanned Social Contact and Single Events

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start thinking about Unplanned Social Contact and Single Events
1	What values shape our understanding?	Alongside close friends and regular associates, we have always enjoyed special events where communities come together for a celebration, sports or cultural event. In these settings people meet one another out of their usual context and unplanned introductions and greetings occur. These spontaneous and unexpected contacts help people to become known and recognised in the community and add to the sense of shared celebration and personal identity. Unexpected encounters in the supermarket have a similar impact, adding to the sense of belonging.
2	What does the law, evidence, professional guidance and your employer say on the matter?	Traditional writers on professional boundaries have been suspicious of these connections and advised staff to avoid accidental contacts, leave settings where unplanned encounters occur, and neither give or accept social invitations of any kind ⁴¹ . We know of no justification for these suspicions that considers the exclusion and psychological harm caused by such practices, nor any evidence for the suggested causal link between informal social contact and abuse.
3	How can you work in a person-centred way to expand life chances for the person whilst keeping everyone safe?	Self-directed support and person-centred planning is highly likely to lead to an ambition to increase community participation and strengthen social networks. One result will be more unplanned social encounters and occasions when off-duty staff and the people they support find themselves in the same social setting. Staff are expected to be courteous to the person when meeting accidentally, but the worker may then decide how to respond. For example, if meeting unexpectedly in a cafe, the worker could decide whether to follow the greeting with an invitation to sit together or not. Sometimes it helps to negotiate these arrangements in advance.
4	How would you know if things are going wrong, and what would you do?	One of the benefits of participation in community settings is the potential for the person to make new acquaintances and social connections. Sometimes staff feel obliged to intervene, alert members of the public to their presence, or even disclose information to others about the person. This is usually a well-meant attempt to help the person and the community have a positive experience, but it can end up over-controlling or breaching confidentiality rules, especially if family or friends wish to know 'who was that person we just met?' If the encounter is between a person being supported by on-duty staff on the one hand, and an off-duty colleague on the other, staff need to take care that their friendly interaction with one another does not lead to the person being ignored ⁴² .
5	How will you look after yourself?	There is no simple solution to the problem of balancing the person's right of access to all kinds of community setting with the worker's need for some time off, and the need for the person to make connections in their own way with the worker's enduring duty of care towards the person and other citizens. Such issues simply need reflection and a constant process of learning about how to work in person-centred ways with each person.

⁴¹ Back in 2008, it was considered that 'giving or accepting social invitations' may not necessarily constitute a breach of sexual boundaries, but may be a precursor to displaying sexualised behaviour.' Commission for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (2008) Learning about sexual boundaries between healthcare professionals and patients: a report on education and training. London: CHRE. Socialising with a service user was similarly viewed as a 'clear unacceptable practice' Rethink (undated) Professional Boundaries Workbook version 1.1 West Midlands Regional Management Team.

⁴² Bates P, Hardwick K, Sanderson K, Sanghera R & Clough J (2012) Almost invisible - providing subtle support in community settings Tizard Learning Disability Review Vol. 17 Issue 4 pp. 156 - 162.

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start thinking about Unplanned Social Contact and Single Events
6	How are your work colleagues and your line manager involved?	Staff should have easy access to a discussion forum where they can talk through what has happened in the person's engagement with community life. Sometimes events are sufficiently serious to demand a formal review to consider what can be learnt, to endorse valued actions and address any shortfalls in conduct by staff.

Relationship Worksheet 8: Regular Membership of a Social Group

	Fundamental Questions	Regular Membership of a Social Group
1	What values shape our understanding?	Sometimes the off-duty worker and the person being supported find themselves participating in the same community group. This might be riding on the same bus every day, attending the same church or exercising at the same gym. In this situation, the off-duty worker may wish to offer low-key support to the person to help them engage in the activity and build connections with the group. The goal is to gradually transfer paid support to natural supports delivered by other members of the group, so that the person's social network is enlarged and power is distributed.
2	What does the law, evidence, professional guidance and your employer say on the matter?	Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights ⁴³ protects everyone's right to freedom of assembly and association. The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities protects disabled people's right to live in and take part in the community and to access support services to prevent isolation and support inclusion (article 19); to participate in political and public life (article 29), and to participate in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (article 30). The Equality Act 2010 applies to associations that have 25 or more members and formal rules governing membership ⁴⁴ . Such organisations are obliged by law to avoid discrimination against disabled people, while other social groups have no more than a moral duty.
3	How can you work in a person-centred way to expand life chances for the person whilst keeping everyone safe?	Some people have become so used to spending their time around services that they are initially reluctant to reach out to the wider community, so great sensitivity is needed in supporting inclusive ambitions in a non-coercive fashion. Social and community activities need to be driven by the person themselves, a self-directed element of their support plan. There are real risks that plans are made to suit the interests of the worker, rather than building on the interests of the person themselves, or start in a self-directed way, but then the worker has such a good time that they ignore signals from the person who is losing interest.
4	How would you know if things are going wrong, and what would you do?	In the community setting, the person may prefer the company of the trusted and familiar worker to the unknown people that they have just met. Staff may subtly encourage the person to persist with the community connection, rather than gravitate to them. So they may attend the same event, but sit at opposite sides of the room.
5	How will you look after yourself?	If you spend off-duty leisure time in a particular social group, you may have strong networks of friendship and obligations towards the other members. Other group members may tell you things about the person being supported. You may need to carefully maintain confidentiality of the person while indicating to colleagues how you wish them to act. For example, there may be an agreed route for feeding back to the support team, and you should encourage your friends to use it, rather than go through you.

⁴³ Enshrined in the Human Rights Act 1998 - see <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/your-rights/human-rights/what-are-human-rights/human-rights-act>.

⁴⁴ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/equalityguidance-associationclubsociety-2015-final.pdf>

	Fundamental Questions	Regular Membership of a Social Group
6	How are your work colleagues and your line manager involved?	Arrangements should be discussed with the person being supported and the worker's manager, and colleagues who may be affected. As with single events, the person has a right to privacy, so your membership of the social group is not an observation post for keeping watch on the person beyond your duty of care. These situations provide powerful opportunities to promote social inclusion, so management, supervision and support planning time should be spent on navigating the complexities and ensuring that arrangements are successful in supporting inclusion and the development of natural supports.

Relationship Worksheet 9: Digital Communication

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in thinking about Digital Communication
1	What values shape our understanding?	Everyone should have the chance of digital inclusion. Social networking can be a source of identity and strength, and can form part of an informal safeguarding system, as online friends monitor each other’s wellbeing. Weak social ties add value alongside stronger friendships ties ⁴⁵ . Staff should support people to use digital communication. Supported people should (with consent) have contact details of their friends and the ‘at work’ contact details of their paid staff, and be able to contact them as independently as possible. Individuals should also be able to access current affairs online.
2	What does the law, evidence, professional guidance and your employer say on the matter?	The United Nations protects disabled people’s right to freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information; to a private life and private communication ⁴⁶ . Official guidance from the Scottish Social Services Council states that, “Allowing a person who uses services or their carer to be your online friend or follower is not acceptable for a registered social service worker...it creates a personal relationship outside of your workplace.” ⁴⁷ A social worker was struck off the professional register for sharing inappropriate material on Facebook ⁴⁸ . This blanket prohibition has not gone unchallenged. ⁴⁹ Data protection obligations prohibit staff from disclosing anyone else’s personal phone number without consent. Staff are not authorised to make public statements on behalf of their employer, unless it is their job to do so.
3	How can you work in a person-centred way to expand life chances for the person whilst keeping everyone safe?	All communications in any medium must be legal, respectful and reasonable. Personal details of any third party should not be shared in an open forum. Support and training should be available to the people who are being supported so that they can use these media effectively and safely. Both people being supported and staff may choose whether to use digital communication, with the exception of those who are employed to do so. Some people will benefit from training in how to detect and challenge online abuse and grooming ⁵⁰ .
4	How would you know if things are going wrong, and what would you do?	Online messages can reach a large audience in seconds, so that the originator quickly loses control of the original material. The language, tone, images and message may impact on the reputation of the person or the organisation. This can lead to unwanted publicity, grooming, cyber-bullying, deception or access to abusive materials, as these antisocial behaviours are easier online than in face-to-face relationships. Workers must support people to use digital social media safely and responsibly, and to uphold the good name of their employer.

45 Granovetter, M.S. (1973) “The strength of weak ties” American Journal of Sociology 78: 1360-80.

46 See Articles 21 and 22 of the Convention - <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/united-nations-convention-rights-people-disabilities-equality-and-human-rights>. For a reflection on privacy and sharing health records, see Brown SM, et al (2016), Balancing digital information-sharing and patient privacy when engaging families in the intensive care unit Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association. See also Rotaru v. Romania (2000) ECHR 28341/95, paras. 43-44.

47 www.sssc.uk.com/

48 <http://www.hpc-uk.org/complaints/hearings/index.asp?id=5707&showAll=1>

49 Peter Bates, Sam Smith, Robert Nisbet, (2015), “Should social care staff be Facebook friends with the people they support?”, The Journal of Adult Protection, Vol. 17 Issue 2 pp. 88 - 98

50 Scottish Government (2013) The keys to life: Improving quality of life for people with learning disabilities. Available at <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0042/00424389.pdf>

	Fundamental Questions	Some places to start in thinking about Digital Communication
5	How will you look after yourself?	Normally, staff will keep their online personal and work life separate, but on rare occasions, it may be helpful for staff to briefly rehearse safe internet use by becoming an online 'friend' with the person they support. They will not be obliged to do this and may create a new online identity for the purpose. Arrangements should be clearly justified and set out in the support plan. Workers are generally discouraged from sharing their personal phone number or email with people using the service and their relatives ⁵¹ . This is to reduce the risk that others may answer the call, or it may lead to disclosure of the worker's address, risk to the household, confusion for the person or loss of essential time off for the staff member.
6	How are your work colleagues and your line manager involved?	Exceptions may be made in unusual circumstances. Talk to your line manager first and record it. If you become an online friend, invite your line manager or a colleague into the group to monitor your conduct. Consider how your message will be perceived before you hit the 'send' button. People may need support to learn the fast-changing etiquette of communicating online. Some consider 'txt spelling' to be unduly informal or an email to be less formal than a posted letter, and so it helps to understand the value that is being placed on a particular medium ⁵² . Individual teams need to work out how they maintain effective records of care whilst upholding the person's right to a private life. Individual staff should not conceal information from their colleagues that may reduce their ability to deliver good support and keep everyone safe.

⁵¹ One study found substantial disagreement amongst social workers concerning the appropriateness of disclosing one's home telephone number. Reamer, F. G. (2003). Boundary issues in social work: Managing dual relationships. *Social Work*, 48 (1), 121-133.

⁵² For example, some families insist their children handwrite thankyou letters for gifts received at Christmas.



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