



Personal Relationships at Work Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the ng group's expected standards regarding personal relationships connected to work (see Section 3 below). This policy applies to all staff, Board members and volunteers within the ng group. For the purposes of this policy, the term personal relationships is defined as any relationship, from friendship through to two people 'being in a relationship together.
- 1.2 ng homes does not wish to interfere in the personal or domestic lives of its Board, staff or volunteers. It also recognises that strong relationships and friendships start and grow from working relationships, and that many couples meet through their jobs, and the associated networks. However, it has been recognised within the Board Members Code of Conduct and the Staff Code of Conduct that over familiarity between Board and staff can be detrimental to individuals and to an organisation's performance and reputation.
- 1.3 The Scottish Housing Regulator also recognises that these types of relationship can be problematic and have recommended that organisations have suitable policies and procedures in place for dealing with any potential problems or issues. As such, over familiarity between colleagues, staff and Board members or with contractors or consultants should be discouraged.

2. Policy Aims

- 2.1 This Policy is designed to achieve the following:
- To be clear on our standards and expectations concerning personal relationships at work.
 - To manage any situations outwith the expected standards in accordance with this policy.
 - To manage situations that may arise in a fair, consistent and appropriate way, and comply with all relevant discriminatory legislation.

3. Expected Standards

- 3.1 The following standards are required to comply with this Policy:
- You must not allow any close personal relationships with a colleague, contractor, client, customer or supplier to influence your conduct, judgement or decisions while at work.
 - You must declare a close personal relationship with a colleague or any other person connected to your employment to your line manager. If the relationship is between a manager/supervisor, we expect this to be declared to a more senior manager and the Director/Chief Executive.
 - You must respect your surroundings, your colleagues and our organisation.
 - You must not behave inappropriately during working hours, nor outwith working hours with any matters connected or associated with your employment or your position within the ng group.
 - You must be aware of your behaviour in any social media interaction connected to personal relationships at work.

- You must follow the highest standards of behaviour at conferences and all other internal or external events where you are there in connection with the ng group.

4. Reference to Other Policies

- 4.1 Board members and staff must be aware that they must uphold our existing policies including: Equality and Diversity, Payments and Benefits, Code of Conduct for Board Members, Staff Code of Conduct, Recruitment, Learning, Development and Further Education, Dignity at Work and Declaration of Interests by Governing Body Members and Employees. This is important in order to avoid allegations of favouritism in recruitment, decisions on training and development and in relation to other aspects e.g. bullying and harassment either in unwanted attention, or after the break-up of a relationship.

5. Housing (Scotland) Act 2010

- 5.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 does not prohibit or restrict payments and benefits to governing body members and employees. The Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Standard 5.4 states that "Governing body members and staff declare and manage openly any conflicts of interest and ensure they do not benefit improperly from their position."
- 5.2 The ng group has a Declaration of Interests Policy and Payments and Benefits Policy in place which covers any related matters and it is therefore, essential that those intending to live together should advise their Line Manager, Chief Executive, or the Chair, of their intentions to co-habit to ensure that the Association complies with legal requirements.

6. Considerations in Avoiding a Breach

- 6.1 It then makes sense for those employees or Board Members who find that their friendship, close relationship or affair may cast doubt on the objectivity of their decision making to advise the appropriate person (Chair for Board and Chief Executive for staff). When to advise will be a matter of judgement for the individuals concerned, but it should certainly be before there is a likelihood of them leaving themselves open to the type of allegations suggested in section 2. It will then be a matter of discussion initially between the parties, and the Chair and Chief Executive as to how to avoid the potential for adverse criticism.
- 6.2 This should also include where relationships have broken down, and both parties feel awkward, and working relationships may be adversely affected. If required, individuals can also discuss their own situation, in confidence, with the Simplyhealth Health and Counselling Helpline on 0800 975 3347 (this is available through the company Health Plan).
- 6.3 ng homes will expect Board Members who are in this position to withdraw from any Board/Committee decisions where their 'partner' could be affected. This would be expected to run for a period of at least 12 months after the relationship ends. In certain circumstances,

it could also result in the Board Member having to consider resignation because these difficulties are too great.

- 6.4. Staff will be expected to maintain the highest standards of propriety and should ensure that their work is not affected by using work time, activities and events, such as conferences to further their personal relationship. They should also be aware of how awkward demonstrations of close affection could be for their work colleagues and Board members.
- 6.5 Any member of staff who is in a position of authority or influence for any decisions where their 'partner' could be affected should withdraw from any Board or decisions. This would be expected to run for a period of at least 12 months after the relationship ends.
- 6.6 All of this depends on the judgement of the individuals concerned, and their managers and the Board. It is not intended that no-one has personal relationships that overlap with work relationships, but we must seek to maintain our policies, achieve the highest standards, and avoid allegations of impropriety which will distract us from our objectives and do not comply with good practice.

7. Summary

- 7.1 In summary, it is essential that Board members and staff recognise that:
 - All behaviour must meet the requirements of our policies and should be such as to avoid allegations of breaching these policies.
 - If you are in a personal relationship which could lead to such allegations, you should take the appropriate steps to make Management or the Chair aware of the situation and jointly try to devise ways of avoiding possible allegations of favouritism or harassment.
 - The highest standards of behaviour are required at work, at conferences and other events where individuals are there as a result of their Board membership or staff employment with ng homes. Existing policies and procedures will act as guidance. Anyone breaching this will be subject to our disciplinary procedures.
 - If you have any doubt regarding the application of this policy, you can discuss your situation in confidence with Human Resources or the Chief Executive and/or the Chair, as appropriate.

8. General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

- 8.1 We recognise the importance of data protection legislation in protecting the rights of individuals in relation to personal information that we may handle and use about them, whether on computer or in paper format. We will ensure that our practices in the handling and use of personal information during the processes and procedures outlined in this policy comply fully with data protection legislation. More information is available from our Data Protection Officer.

9. Other Related Policies

- Data Protection
- Code of Conduct for Board members
- Code of Conduct for Staff
- Declaration of Interests by Governing Body Members and Employees
- Gifts, Hospitality and Donations
- Payments and Benefits
- Dignity at Work
- Rules
- Standing Orders
- Whistleblowing
- Equality and Diversity
- Learning, Development and Further Education

10. Equality Impact Assessment

10.1 This Policy is equally applicable to all and has no detrimental impact on protected characteristic groups as specified within the Equality Act 2010.

11. Policy Review

11.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier in line with regulatory or legislative guidance/changes or good practice guidelines.