



Close Personal Relationships in the Workplace Policy

Purpose

York Childcare recognises that employees who work together may have or form close personal relationships, and that this can bring with it many benefits to both staff and the organisation. While York Childcare does not wish to interfere with these personal relationships, it is necessary to ensure that all employees behave, and are perceived to behave, in an appropriate and professional manner at work.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the approach that YC will take to ensure that close personal relationships at work do not have an adverse impact in the workplace or on the reputation of YC. The aims of this policy are intended to avoid any possible conflict of interest, perception or accusation of bias, favouritism or prejudice. They are also intended to ensure that all employees feel confident of fair treatment without fear that a close personal relationship will influence their or other employees' treatment or broader working relationships.

This policy applies equally to all employees working for YC, regardless of their job, level of seniority, gender or sexual orientation, and also to the organisation's Trustees.

Close personal relationships, for the purpose of this policy, include pre-existing relationships as well as relationships that develop between employees whilst in YC employment.

Definition of close personal relationship:

- Employees or applicants who are married, dating, in a civil partnership or cohabiting;
- Immediate family members of the applicant or employee, e.g. parents, step-parents, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild;
- Other relations of the applicant or employee, e.g. extended family such as aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews and any other individuals with whom there is a close personal relationship;
- Close friendships – in some circumstances.

This policy also covers close personal relationships with contractors and suppliers, as well as with other employees.

Principles

YC recognises that relationships as defined above may exist or develop within the organisation. It is important to be clear about what actions will be taken to prevent concerns arising and to address any that do arise.

Any disclosure relating to a close personal relationship under the terms of this policy will be treated sensitively, fairly and with an appropriate level of confidentiality.

Wherever possible, YC will seek to agree with both parties, a resolution to any issues raised as a result of close personal relationships at work. However, it reserves the right to impose a solution if an agreed approach cannot be achieved.

The disciplinary procedure will be used to deal with serious breaches of this policy.



Expectations

Any employee who is involved in a close personal relationship with a colleague, contractor or supplier must not allow that relationship to influence their conduct at work in a way that could be, or be perceived to be, detrimental to the interests of YC, to other employees or to YC stakeholders and service users.

In order to avoid a situation in which an employee has managerial authority over another with whom they have a close personal relationship, YC reserves the right, if deemed necessary and after careful consideration of all available options;

- To elect to transfer one or both of the employees involved in the relationship to a job in another team, service, or workplace.
- To consider dismissal of one or both of the employees involved, if no other options are available.

Declaration

YC requires employees to declare a close personal relationship to their manager where there is a real or perceived potential conflict of interest. Any declaration should be treated with confidence and noted on the personal file.

This policy warns employees that they must advise their line manager or another senior person if they have a close personal relationship with another employee, customer, client, supplier or agency worker and warns of the disciplinary action which may follow any inappropriate behaviour on the part of the employee.

Disclosure of such relationships creates a transparent environment

A failure to disclose such a relationship may result in disciplinary action.

Management

The type of issues that should be explored include:

- potential conflict of interest and confidentiality issues, including the impact on the perceptions and employee relations within the team;
- the potential for alternative supervision/line management arrangements where there are potential conflicts of interest;
- impact on service users or the public, including issues relating to trust and confidence and the public image of YC.

YC recognises that it is important to ensure that any approaches or actions are not unfair or discriminatory. YC will avoid any assumption at the outset that the working arrangement will be unsatisfactory without exploring the issues, whilst exploring the issues that may arise to ensure these can be managed effectively.



Where a close personal relationship involves the direct line manager or senior reporting manager and a team member, the appropriate senior manager should, in consultation with Human Resources and both employees:

- make alternative supervision/line management arrangement of the team member for issues involving a potential conflict of interest.
These include matters related to pay, promotion, job opportunity, redundancy, discipline and grievance issues;
- consider if it is appropriate to communicate any agreed adjustments etc to other colleagues in the team/workplace to manage any concerns;
- assess any impact on service users, including issues relating to trust and confidence and the public image of YC.

Expectations should be clearly defined and managed as appropriate.

Actions to be taken when issues cannot be managed effectively

Where any issues identified cannot be managed effectively or the individuals within the relationship feel uncomfortable remaining within the same team (including after the breakdown of a relationship), a discussion should take place with both employees to explore whether a move to another team or setting might be the most appropriate way forward.

When discussing such an issue there should be no assumptions made, on gender, status/grade etc. as to who might be the most appropriate employee to move. Care should be taken to avoid discrimination and ensure that the views of the individuals involved are taken into account, balancing this with the needs of the service and the issues that present themselves. Human Resources should be involved in the discussion.

A transfer could mean a move to a different setting for one or both the employees; Wherever possible the transfer should be to a 'suitable alternative' post on the same terms and conditions as the employee's current post. Redeployment will be sought with transferees being given priority for vacant posts, after consideration of any redeployees on the grounds of redundancy or ill-health capability.

Of the two employees involved in a particular situation, YC is likely to consider transferring the employee whose skills, experience and knowledge could be more easily deployed elsewhere; An employee who refuses to move to a 'suitable alternative' post may be subject to the disciplinary process on the basis of refusal to comply with a reasonable management instruction.

Dismissal

Dismissal (under the term for 'some other substantial reason') will only be considered as a last resort, where the actions of either one or both parties concerned has adversely affected the operations or reputation of YC or has significant potential to do so.