

Livewell Southwest

Relationships at Work Policy

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Notice to staff using a paper copy of this policy.

The policies and procedures page of Livewell Southwest Sharepoint holds the most recent version of this document and staff must ensure that they are using the most recent guidance.

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Document review history

Version No.	Type of change	Date	Originator of change	Description of change
For previous review history please contact the PRVG Co-ordinator.				
1.1	Extended	July 2018	Head of HR & Staff Wellbeing	Extended
1.2	Extended	February 2020	Head of HR & Staff Wellbeing	Extended
1.3	Extended	January 2021	HR Admin	Extended
1.4	Extended	September 2021	Associate Director of HR & Engagement	Extended
1.5	Full Review	May 2022	VPRG	Full Review
1.6	Reviewed	April 2025	HR People Team	Re-wording of some elements to bring in line with latest terminology.

Contents		Page
1.	Introduction	5
2.	Purpose and Scope	5
3.	Roles & Responsibilities	5
4.	Definitions	6
5.	Exclusion from Employment of Related Persons	6
6.	Employment of Relatives within the same Service or Establishment	7
7.	Personal Relationships in the Workplace	7
8.	Responding to Personal Relationships in the Workplace	7
9.	Dealing with Inappropriate Behaviour	9
10.	Breakdown of Relationships	9
11.	Recruitment of Relatives/Partners/Friends/Acquaintances	10
12.	Training and Awareness	10
13.	Monitoring Compliance	10

Relationships at Work Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Livewell Southwest recognises that employees who work together may form personal friendships and in some cases personal relationships. While it does not wish to interfere with these personal relationships, it is necessary for Livewell Southwest to ensure that all employees behave in an appropriate and professional manner at work.
- 1.2 This policy concerns the appointment, treatment and promotion of Livewell Southwest employees where they are related or are in a friendship or relationship with other Livewell Southwest employees/potential employees.
- 1.3 In most circumstances the employment of partners or relatives or personal relationships in a large organisation is of little or no significance. However, there are limited circumstances where it is of significance and consequently, where serious difficulties could arise. This will apply where there is a possibility of partners or relatives working in posts which have a direct line management relationship, such that one would be involved in appointing, managing, appraising, disciplining etc., the other. This will also apply where both would be members of a management or clinical group with corporate responsibilities.

2. Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:
 - Minimise the possibility of allegations of nepotism and/or preferential treatment.
 - Ensure that prospective and existing members of staff are treated fair and equal.
 - Ensure Livewell Southwest maintains its commitment to the principles of equal opportunity.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all staff employed by Livewell Southwest, together with those on a joint contract with the organisation and another employer.
- 2.3 Although not employees of Livewell Southwest, bank staff, agency staff and outside contractors will be required to comply with the policy.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Employees are responsible for:

- Declaring to their line manager any relationship with another employee working in the same department. If the person you are related to or that you have a personal relationship with is your manager then you and your partner need to approach the next level of management.
- Ensuring that if they are involved in a personal relationship with a colleague,

contractor or supplier that they do not allow that relationship to influence their conduct at work.

- Declaring to their line manager if a partner / relative / friend / acquaintance seek to apply for a post within the same department or where the position may cause a conflict of interest.

3.2 Managers are responsible for:

- Treating any declaration of a personal relationship in confidence and on a 'need to know' basis.
- Where the relationship is between a manager and an employee they manage, that the declaration is recorded on the personal files of both employees.
- To deal promptly and fairly with any instance of unfavourable treatment of one employee by another, for example where a relationship breaks down or comes to an end.
- Address any concerns caused by a relationship/friendship in line with the policy.

4. Definitions

4.1 For the purposes of this Policy, a relative includes:

- Marriage/ Civil Partnerships
- Partner
- Parents, including in-laws and stepparents, adoptive parents, guardians and special guardians
- Children, including in laws and stepchildren, fostered and adopted
- Brother and/or sister including in-laws and stepbrother and/or sister
- Grandparents and Grandchildren
- Aunts, uncles, cousins colleagues in an on-going relationship Carers

4.2 A friend/acquaintance is anyone who you may have a particular relationship with, not just a partner.

4.3 Definition of nepotism - favouritism shown to relatives or close friends by those with power or influence.

The above list is not exhaustive.

5. Exclusion from Employment of Related Persons

5.1 Except with the written consent of the Director of People and Professionalism (or equivalent), and as necessary, Chief Executive, a person shall not be appointed to any position which would result in direct line management relationship between themselves and another member of staff who is a family relation as defined in section 4 as above.

6. Employment of Related Persons within the same Service or Establishment

6.1 Exceptions to Section 3 of the policy document shall be as follows:

- a) In circumstances where the employment of relatives or partners together in the same establishment is permitted, where the individuals are not in a direct or line supervisory capacity, the procedure leading to an appointment or promotion must not involve the other relative in any way. At no time should a relative take part in any procedure involving HR processes that affect the other person. Examples include resolution, discipline, absence management, capability, recruitment, supervision, appraisal and redeployment.
- b) Where employment of a related person is permitted by the Director of People and Professionalism (or equivalent), interventions will be necessary to ensure disciplinary or resolution procedures are conducted fairly. As a result, measures must be put in place to ensure that a related person does not investigate or judge a relative or partner.
- c) Budget signatories must be independent.
- d) Medication signatories must be independent.

7. Personal Relationships in the Workplace

7.1 Whilst Livewell Southwest does not wish to interfere with employees' personal lives or relationships; it may nevertheless be appropriate and necessary for a line manager to:

- Prevent two members of staff in a relationship from working together where one has managerial or supervisory authority over the other;
- Be informed if two colleagues working together form a romantic relationship;
- Seek, where necessary for the smooth running of the service to transfer one or both of the employees involved in a personal relationship, so as to prevent their working together;
- Ensure that all employees behave in an appropriate and professional manner whilst at work.

7.2 If a line manager has reasonable grounds to believe that two employees have formed a personal relationship with each other, that has a potential impact on the workplace and this has not already been disclosed, the manager should approach each of the employees privately to ask them whether or not this is the case.

7.3 Where the two employees work together in the same department or service, it does not follow that problems will inevitably arise and the line manager should not seek to interfere, except in circumstances where one of the two

employees concerned has some sort of authority or influence over the other.

8. Responding to Personal Relationships in the Workplace

8.1 When a line manager learns of a personal relationship involving employees that would:

- Affect direct line management relationships;
- Be perceived as providing an unfair advantage as a result of the overlap of personal and professional relationship;
- Compromise confidentiality/reporting arrangements.

They should seek to:

- Discuss the employment relationship and the potential difficulties that could arise out of a potential conflict of loyalty and/or interest. This can be done with the individuals separately or together. Managers may find it useful to seek advice prior to this discussion with their manager or from the HR People Team.
- Discuss and determine the appropriate steps to take, to eliminate and avoid conflict of interest. The actions should not unreasonably disadvantage either member of staff.
- Where it is established that a personal relationship exists between two colleagues in circumstances where one manages or supervises the other or where both are members of a management or clinical group with corporate responsibilities, the line manager may wish to consider:
 - Changing reporting structures and/or;
 - Changing job responsibilities.

Examples may include removal of any rostering/timesheet/overtime authorisation, and/or expenses authorisation from the individual in the relationship with line management responsibilities (including limiting access/reassigning permissions to digital platforms where necessary).

- Discuss privacy concerns and appropriate confidentiality, including whether it is necessary to inform anyone else of any changes made to the employment relationship.

8.2 All discussions should be documented as follows:

- Information received from the individuals;
- Potential conflicts discussed;
- Steps taken to avoid or eliminate conflicts;
- Details of any review period;
- Details of any disclosures which were made to other managers.

In these circumstances both employees should be consulted with individually with a view to reaching a satisfactory agreement to avoid people with a personal relationship working in the same direct line of management.

Similarly, a line manager might seek to take appropriate action where an

employee is involved in a personal relationship with a service user, contractor or supplier, if it reasonably seems to the manager that this relationship might lead to difficulties for Livewell Southwest or any of its employees.

9. Dealing with Inappropriate Behaviour

- 9.1 If a manager observes, or is made aware of inappropriate behaviour at work between two employees who have a personal relationship, the matter should be dealt with sensitively but firmly.
- 9.2 Any minor incidents should be dealt with by the manager holding an informal discussion with the employees concerned to remind them that overt personal behaviour at work is not acceptable and to ask them to refrain from such behaviour in the future.
- 9.3 The manager should focus on the facts and provide examples of issues the employees have said or done and point out why these are inappropriate in a work context. This should include an explanation as to how the particular behaviour came across, or how it affected others.
- 9.4 Informal discussions of this nature should be documented in a file note and retained on the individuals personal files.
- 9.5 If the behaviour continues it may be necessary to deal with the matter under Livewell Southwest's Disciplinary Policy.

10. Breakdown of Relationships

- 10.1 Particular problems can arise when a personal relationship between two colleagues breaks down. Managers should be alert to this and deal with any issues appropriately and sensitively.
- 10.2 Examples of problems that may arise include:
 - The employees refusing to speak to one another or refusing to co-operate in work matters;
 - One employee displaying negative behaviour towards the other;
 - One employee raising unwarranted grievance against the other;
 - Unacceptable Behaviour which can take many forms.
- 10.3 Whilst, managers should not assume that such problems will be inevitable, they should be alert to the possibility, monitor the situation and in the event that a problem does arise, seek to address it promptly. This should be achieved by holding an informal meeting with the employee concerned to advise them that, whatever their personal feelings towards the other person, all working relationships must continue to be conducted in a professional manner, and that the employee must continue to communicate and cooperate fully with the other employee in all respects.
- 10.4 Informal discussions of this nature should be documented in a file note and retained on the individual's personal file.

10.5 If the behaviour continues it may be necessary to deal with the matter under Livewell Southwest's Disciplinary Policy.

11. Recruitment of Relatives/Partners/ Friends/Acquaintances

11.1 Livewell Southwest's sole concern, in such appointments as in all others, is that the individual selected is demonstrably the best candidate for the position and the employment decision is based on the individual's knowledge, skill and experience.

11.2 If you are an appointing manager or an interview panel member and a relative/partner/friend or acquaintance applies for the post you must declare an interest and withdraw from the process. It is your responsibility to discuss with your relative/partner/friend/acquaintance the implications of this Policy and you must make your manager aware of the application.

11.3 If you are an employee and you are aware that a relative / partner / friend / acquaintance may be applying for the post you must also make your manager aware of the application.

11.4 Any individual who makes an unauthorised offer of employment or significant change in the conditions of employment involving a relative / partner / friend /acquaintance assumes responsibility for any liabilities and expenses which may arise out of that action. They may also be subject to disciplinary action under the Livewell Southwest Disciplinary Policy.

12. Training and Awareness

12.1 Advice and support will be provided by the HR team to support staff and managers in adhering to this policy and their understanding of dealing with relationships at work.

12.2 The HR team will raise awareness of this policy through the publication of information on the Intranet and to advise staff of changes to the policy through the staff bulletin and ratification processes.

13. Monitoring Compliance

This policy will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. A full review will take place every three years by the HR Department unless legislative changes determine otherwise.

All policies are required to be electronically signed by the Lead Director. Proof of the electronic signature is stored in the policies database.

The Lead Director approves this document and any attached appendices. For operational policies this will be the Head of Service.

The Executive signature is subject to the understanding that the policy owner has followed the organisation process for policy Ratification

Title: Director of People and Professionalism

Date: 6th May 2025