



Close Personal Relationships Policy

Version Control

Version number	Purpose /change	Amends	Author	Date
0.1	New policy draft		Michelle Thompson	29/06/2023

1.1 Introduction

This policy sets out the West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) approach to close personal relationships at work. The Council recognises that individuals who work together may already have or form close personal relationships at work and respects employees right to a private life. This needs to be balanced with a working environment based on dignity, trust and respect where employees behave in an appropriate, professional and responsible way at work and that any close personal relationships do not compromise this. This policy aims to support managers in dealing sensitively but effectively where employees have or form close personal relationships at work.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all employees of West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) including those on temporary or fixed term contracts. It does not apply to contractors or consultants external to the Council.

1.3 Key Principles

- WLDC recognises that close personal relationships may exist or form between employees during the course of their employment and will manage these situations with care and sensitivity in the interests of all concerned
- We expect any employees in a close personal relationship to be transparent about any relationship and to behave with the upmost professionalism
- We understand that close personal relationships can affect the trust and confidence of colleagues and the public in relation to actual or perceived conflicts of interest, fair treatment, ability to raise issues openly within a team or with their line manager and will seek to minimise these issues
- Employees must not be involved in any decisions relating to recruitment, discipline, promotion or pay adjustments where there is a close personal relationship
- Employees must declare all close personal relationships as they develop and on an annual basis

2.0 Definitions

2.1 *Definition of a close personal relationship*

Close personal relationships are defined as:

- Employees who are married, dating, in a partnership or co-habiting arrangement or other similar arrangement.
- Immediate family / Stepfamily members e.g. grandparents, parents, children or siblings
- Other extended family relationships e.g. aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, in-laws
- Close friendships
- Business associates (outside of the Council)

This list aims to cover all eventualities but is not exhaustive.

2.1 *Definition of a team*

A team or work area will usually be self-evident e.g. working under the same direct line management arrangement. However, there may be situations where the relationship involves a senior manager and the definition and potential for conflict of interest may be wider.

3.0 Recruitment and appointment of employees

3.1 *Participation in the recruitment process*

An employee (or Councillor) must not be involved in any appointment process where they have a close personal relationship with any applicant or the recruiting manager.

3.2 *Requirement to disclose a close personal relationship*

All applicants for roles at WLDC are required to disclose and provide details on their application form any close personal relationships with any employee of the Council or elected member. Failure to disclose so may disqualify the applicant from employment. Likewise, any applicant who seeks the support for employment of an elected Member will also be disqualified.

3.3 *When a relationship is declared during the application process*

The employee concerned must not be involved in any part of the recruitment process. The implications of the relationship should be discussed during the selection process and to ensure that the applicant is the most suitable person for the role, and any issues surrounding the relationship can be addressed. The recruitment panel would consider operational issues and standards, such as but not limited to:

- Provision for alternative supervision / management arrangement to avoid any conflict of interest on appraisal, pay, promotion and discipline issues (if there is a close personal relationship between the applicant and potential line manager or senior reporting manager)
- Any impact on operational issues that could arise and how they could be managed such as shift or working patterns or annual leave
- Any impact on financial regulations
- Any impact on other team members and the public, including issues relating to trust and confidence and the Council's public image

3.4 *Authority to recruit*

Where, the recruiting manager considers that an applicant could properly be recruited and has a declared close personal relationship, with the factors at 3.3 fully considered, the appointment must be cleared by the Chief Executive.

A written record of the authorisation and the rationale will be kept with the candidate's original application on their personal file.

4.0 Close Personal relationships formed during employment

4.1 Requirement to disclose a close personal relationship

Where a close personal relationship is formed between members of the same team, this should be disclosed immediately using the declaration of interest process. Failure to disclose could leave employees open to allegations of misconduct should subsequent issues arise.

It is acknowledged that friendships naturally form in the workplace. Employees are expected to use their judgement as to whether a friendship has developed to the extent that it could be described as a close personal relationship which could give rise to the issues that this policy seeks to address. In these circumstances the relationship should be disclosed.

4.2 Relationship between employee and manager

If a close personal relation develops or exists between an employee and manager, both must ensure that essential standards of professionalism and impartiality are maintained. The appropriate Senior Officer in consultation with HR must be made aware.

The appropriate Senior Officer must carry out a risk assessment and put in place steps to mitigate any risks identified, including any potential conflicts of interest, based on the roles of the employees concerned.

Mitigating steps could include:

- a) Arrangements for different day to day supervision*
- b) Changes to normal reporting line*
- c) Additional supervision of review meetings, i.e. probation, appraisal review, with either HR or another manager from a separate service in attendance*
- d) Changes to the recruitment process*
- e) Additional finance checks*

4.3 Relationship between employee and team colleagues

Where a close personal relationship is formed between two team members (with no line management or supervisory relationship). Their line manager should explore relevant issues with both employees including:

- Any impact on operational issues that could arise and how they could be managed such as shift or working patterns or annual leave
- Any impact on financial regulations
- Any impact on other team members and the public, including issues relating to trust and confidence and the Council's public image
- Considering if it is appropriate to communicate any agreed adjustments to other team members to manage any concerns

Expectations should be clearly defined and managed appropriately

4.4 *Relationship between employee and members*

Where a close personal relationship exists between an employee and member. The appropriate senior officer in consultation with HR should be made aware.

If an employee has any questions or concerns, these should be directed to the Monitoring Officer or Head of Paid Service.

Further guidance can be found in the Members Code of Conduct.

5.0 When issues cannot be managed effectively, or a relationship breaks down

When any issues identified cannot be managed effectively, or a relationship breaks down the line manager should contact HR. The situation will be addressed sensitively with both employees with a view to resolving the issues. Care will be taken to avoid discrimination, ensuring the views of the employees concerned are balanced with issues presenting and the needs of the service.

6.0 Impact on other colleagues

Employee who feels they are affected by a close personal relationship at work involving other colleagues, can approach in confidence their line manager or the HR team to explain their concerns.

7.0 Financial Regulations

Where a close personal relationship exists between two employees involved in financial transactions, the Council's Financial Regulations should be followed to ensure appropriate separation of duties, probity and other financial safeguards are followed.

8.0 Relationships with Contractors or Suppliers

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, any relationship between an employee and contractor or supplier with whom they are involved at work must be declared to their line manager and recorded in the Register of Interest and they must not be involved in award of contracts or orders with any contractor or supplier with whom they have a close personal relationship.

Policy Statement

West Lindsey District Council has a commitment to equal opportunities. It seeks to ensure that no potential or current employee receives less favourable treatment than another on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

If you would like a copy of this document in large print, audio, Braille or in another language:

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