



# Boundary Policy

Kernow Positive  
Support

SPECIALISED HIV  
INFORMATION,  
SUPPORT,  
RESPIRE &  
RETREAT

POLICY  
DOCUMENT 2017  
Revised 2018

# KPS Professional & Personal Boundaries Policy

Kernow Positive Support (KPS) is committed to providing an environment where all staff, service users and volunteers (including contracted workers) enjoy equality of opportunity.

KPS works to eliminate all forms of discrimination and recognise that this requires, not only a commitment to remove discrimination, but also action through positive policies to redress inequalities.

Providing equality of opportunity means understanding and appreciating the diversity of our staff, service users and volunteers ensuring a supportive environment free from harassment.

Because of this KPS actively encourages its staff to challenge discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for all.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Staff and volunteers working within Kernow Positive Support (KPS) – ‘The Organisation’ have a responsibility to provide safe, effective and caring services to Service Users within their care. Whilst it is recognised that staff/volunteers must establish a rapport with Service Users and provide friendly and accessible services, they are, responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries between themselves and Service Users.

The rights and needs of Service Users should be respected at all times. However, by the very nature of the illness/disability of the Service Users within the organisation the relationship between the Service User and staff/volunteers is not one of equal balance. Staff and volunteers must recognise and understand that they are in a position of power. This power must not be abused at any time. It is essential therefore, that all interactions between Service Users and staff/volunteers must be seen in terms of a professional relationship. Staff and volunteers must have a clear framework within which to carry out therapeutic interactions.

Because there is a potential for positions of power to be abused and professional boundaries broken KPS must make it clear that the responsibility to maintain such boundaries rests with individual staff. Failure to meet this responsibility may lead to formal disciplinary action being taken against them (see the KPS Disciplinary Procedure Policy).

Staff and volunteers must ensure that working relationships are not misread or confused with friendship or other personal relationships. This is essential in order to protect Service Users at a time when they may be vulnerable. It is also to protect staff from any risk of potential false allegations.

If a member of staff or the KPS volunteer force is in any doubt they should seek guidance and advice from their direct line-manager, and in the case of volunteers their co-ordinator.

## 2. SCOPE

This policy is written for all Service Users who are either currently receiving support or who had had past support and for all staff providing direct or indirect support irrespective of grade or discipline. The policy covers all areas of the services provided by KPS.

## 3. RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of all line-managers and those designated to responsibility to ensure staff and volunteers have a full understanding of this policy and that they and their staff/volunteers adhere to the policy requirements at all times.

## 4. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

4.1 clarify the roles of staff providing direct or indirect care to the Service Users.

4.2 clarify the expectations of Service Users.

4.3 clarify the division between the professional and personal relationships between Service Users and staff/volunteers therefore enabling consistent approaches to Service Users.

## 5. REQUIREMENTS

Immediately an employee and/or volunteer thinks that there is a risk of a potential breakdown of his/her professional boundaries he/she must bring it to the attention of their line manager/co-ordinator and/or a KPS Trustee.

If staff/volunteer feels a colleague is at risk of potential breakdown of professional boundaries then they too have a duty to protect both Service User and staff/volunteers, and should bring the matter to the line-manager/co-ordinator and/or a KPS Trustee.

Staff/volunteers must alert their line-manager/co-ordinator and/or a KPS Trustee if they have a personal knowledge of a Service User who comes under their care.

If an employee and/or a volunteer is aware, or becomes aware that he/she is related to a Service User then this should be brought to the immediate attention of the line-manager/coordinator and/or a KPS Trustee.

## 6. DEFINITIONS

### 6.1 Therapeutic Relationships

A therapeutic relationship is a professional relationship between the Service User and the employee/volunteer in whom the latter has a responsibility for ensuring that objectivity is achieved at all times.

### 6.2 Boundary

When the 'line' between the professional and personal relationship is crossed and the relationship between the Service User and the employee/volunteer moves from being objective to subjective. An indication of this is found in Section 7 which identifies unacceptable behaviour.

### 6.3 Service User

6.3.1 A current Service User for whom the worker is directly involved in providing support/care.

6.3.2 The Service User who has previously had direct care from the employee/volunteer.

6.3.3 A current Service User who has had no direct professional relationship with an employee/volunteer.

### 6.4 Employee

This is anyone employed, contracted and/or who is a registered volunteer by KPS to provide direct or indirect support/care.

## 7. UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICES

Unacceptable practices are those which put the professional/personal relationship in danger of crossing the therapeutic 'boundary'. The following list not exhaustive and if staff/volunteers are in any doubt they should consult with their line-manager/co-ordinator and/or a KPS Trustee.

### 7.1 Sexual Contact

#### 7.1.1 Sexual acts.

#### 7.1.2 Requests for/suggestion of sexual acts.

#### 7.1.3 Physical contact which could be construed as sexually suggestive, sexual innuendo and/or insinuation.

Some examples of more subtle inappropriate behaviour may include the following:

#### 7.1.4 Inappropriate dress.

7.1.5 Inappropriate use of body or verbal language i.e. language which is used to satisfy the need of the employee/volunteer concerned and are not likely to have any therapeutic benefits for the Service User.

#### 7.1.6 Asking the Service User inappropriate questions regarding their sexual habits.

7.1.7 Asking the Service User inappropriate questions regarding their hygiene or sanitary issues.

#### 7.2 Acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality

Staff, volunteers and those contracted to work for the organization must not accept any personal gift(s) or hospitality from Service Users which could be interpreted as being given by the Service User in return for preferential treatment. Where it is difficult to refuse a gift, then the employee/volunteer must discuss this with their line-manager/co-ordinator and/or a KPS Trustee immediately.

#### 7.3 Inappropriate Personal Disclosure and Activities

Staff, volunteers and those contracted to work for the organisation must not divulge any personal information about themselves or others involved directly and/or in directly with the organization.

This includes:

7.3.1 the giving out of personal telephone/mobile numbers or e-mail addresses/twitter tags.

7.3.2 the giving out of home and/or work addresses.

7.3.3 not meeting Service Users socially other than at KPS events.

7.3.4 respecting a Service User's privacy outside of KPS venues

example: not saying hello in the street etc. (the Service User should be allowed to acknowledge you first – this should be clearly explained to a Service User to prevent misunderstanding regarding a perceived 'ignoring a Service User in a public place)

7.3.5 the awareness of the implications of divulging too much personal information.

#### 7.4 Concealing Information from Colleagues about Service Users

This might include:

7.4.1 personal information.

7.4.2 letting Service Users know where they or other staff/volunteers members live.

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7.4.3 the intention of the Service User to self-harm or harm others.

7.4.5 not reporting violent or critical incident/issues.

7.4.6 child protection issues.

7.4.7 not completing full records of Service Users interactions.

#### 7.5 Providing Substances to Service Users which are not prescribed

All complementary therapy treatments/substances must be administered in according with the Policy for the control and administration of such as laid out in the KPS policy and guidelines regarding such issues.

#### 7.6 Misuse of Money/Property

7.6.1 Staff/volunteers must adhere to any policy for handling of Service User(s) money and property.

7.6.2 Staff/volunteers must get their line-manager/co-ordinator and/or a KPS Trustee's permission before loaning their personal property.

#### 7.7 Misuse of Service User's Facilities and Property

Staff/volunteers must not use Service User's property for their own use.

Examples are as follows:

7.7.1 Borrowing Service User's television/videos/telephone (except for education and information purposes and where it is part of the support/care plan).

7.7.2 Eating Service User's food.

#### 7.8 Discrimination

This can take the form of subjective comments which can be either written or verbal about a Service User

7.8.1 culture or race.

7.8.2 gender.

7.8.3 sexual orientation or preference.

7.8.4 age.

7.8.5 physical characteristics.

7.8.6 or any other personal aspects.

7.9 Advice, Benefits/Treatment and other forms of Support and Care

It is not acceptable for the employee to carry out benefit/treatment advice or give other support/care when:

7.9.1 it is not part of the Service User's support/care plan.

7.9.2 the employee/volunteer is not qualified to provide this element of advice/support/care or;

7.9.3 it has not been discussed with the team

Some examples of these are as follows:

7.9.4 taking photographs without the Service User's permission.

7.9.5 using statements/articles without the Service User's permission.

7.9.6 complementary and/or alternative therapies.

7.9.7 religious rituals.

7.10 Abuse of Power/Creating a Dependence/Exploitation

Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to discourage over reliance of the Service User on one employee/volunteer and to encourage and enable the Service User towards independence.

Some examples of abuse of power and the potential for creating a dependence are as follow:

7.10.1 inviting Service Users to the staff/volunteer's home.

7.10.2 socialising outside the therapeutic boundary relationship.

7.10.3 encouraging the Service Users to rely on one employee/volunteer.

7.10.4 using the Service User for the employee's and/or volunteer's emotional needs

7.10.5 financial: using a client to further a business or financial interest for personal gain

7.10.6 promotion of commercial products & services not authorized by the charity

8. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

8.1 Staff.

8.1.1 Supervision.

Staff/volunteers must actively seek regular supervision, which is used constructively in the area of disclosing any feeling that they may be developing for the Service User.

These disclosures will be kept confidential unless the situation remains unresolved and the relationship develops into a personal one, in which case the supervisor will be responsible for seeking further advice on this.

8.1.2 Training and Updating

Qualified employees and volunteers have the responsibility to ensure that they have knowledge of and understanding of the importance of keeping boundaries and the theories and concepts of transference and counter-transference and to ensure that unqualified workers/volunteers have an opportunity to understand these.

8.1.3 Service User Information

Employees/volunteers are expected to explain the relationship between them and the Service User in a sensitive manner and where appropriate form a contract of support and care with the Service User.

8.2 Managers

8.2.1 Training and Updating

Trustees and the KPS Responsible Trustee are responsible for facilitating regular training and updating.

8.2.2 Service User Information

Trustees and the KPS Responsible Trustee must ensure that the Service Users have access to up-to-date information about services and service philosophies.

8.3 Cultural Differences

Staff and volunteers should be aware of Service Users cultural differences and give due respect and dignity.

#### 8.4 Peer Support

Peer supporters will have been chosen to ensure they have the necessary skills for the role. The clients they are matched with will have been carefully selected to match the individual Peer Supporters skills.

##### 8.4.1 Boundaries

Peer Supporters should take the time on their first meeting with their client to discuss and agree boundaries. Clear goals and targets will have been established at Peer Support training.

##### 8.4.2 Strategies

Peers develop strategies to define and safeguard interpersonal boundaries in the context of building a mutually respectful relationship with their clients.

##### 8.4.3 Limits

Peers must define the limits of their expertise. Peers must be clear about the amount of time and energy they can give.

##### 8.4.4 Relationship

For some clients the presence of a person who cares and is willing to go an extra mile to help may be unfamiliar and confusing. These actions may be misinterpreted as an effort to establish an intimate relationship that may be welcomed or rebuffed.

##### 8.4.5 Difficulties

Peers must advise the Peer Support Supervisor if the relationship with the client becomes difficult.

##### 8.4.6 Communication, Monitoring & Supervision

Peer Supporters should have regular and reliable means of contact with their manager. Regular supervision sessions should be organised by the manager to monitor the case. The feedback will be used to gauge the success of the scheme.

##### 8.4.7 Review

It is recommended that the Peer and client revisit and agree continuing boundaries from time to time, especially when the relationship becomes long term and the boundary between a provision of a service and a growing mutual friendship becomes blurred.

#### 9. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The policy will be monitored as set out in 8.4.6 via:

9.1 the range of policies and standards which are referred to in this document.

9.2 the complaints procedure and the disciplinary procedure.

9.3 audit of KPS standards for Service Users feedback.