

***Larne Crisis***

***Accommodation***

POLICY FOR PROFESSIONAL
AND PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

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ASSURANCE STATEMENT

LCCC is committed to ensuring that all Service Users and Carers are able to engage in therapeutic relationships with staff members in a culture of safety.

INTRODUCTION

For the establishment of accessible services it is necessary that all LCCC staff are approachable in their dealings with Service Users and Carers. However, it is important that working relationships are not misused or confused with friendship or other personal relationships.

It is essential that all interactions between staff, Service Users and Carers must be seen in terms of a professional relationship. For a culture to exist in LCCC all staff are required to work within the framework of policy procedures.

SCOPE

This policy is written for;

* All Service Users who are either currently receiving childcare or housing.
* All LCCC staff providing direct or indirect services irrespective of grade or discipline.
* All areas of service including day services, community services and housing accommodation.

EQUALITY STATEMENT

LCCC is committed in having a service that is people driven and best of class and ensuring that it has systems and processes in place, which meet the needs of its service users and staff.

All staff ensure that all service users are treated equally and fairly that no individual will be judged or treated differently with regard to their ethinicity, gender, religious or belief system, disability, sexual orientation or their age.

RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the managers to ensure that their staff have a full understanding of this policy and that this policy is adhered to at all times.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to;

* Clarify the roles of staff providing direct or indirect care to Service Users.
* Clarify the expectations of Service Users.
* Clarify the division between personal and professional relationships.
* Enable consistent approached of Service Users

DEFINITIONS

Boundary

* Defines the limits of behaviour, which allow staff to have professional relationships with Service Users receiving care and/or treatment from them.
* These boundaries are based upon trust, respect and the appropriate use of power.

Service Users

* A current client for whom the worker is directly involved in providing services
* A current client who has had no direct contact from a staff member but is receiving a service from LCCC.

Carers

* One who is close to the Service User and part of their clinical experience.

Staff Member

* Anyone who is employed directly or indirectly

DIVERSITY

Cultural Differences and acknowledge that they are often in a position of power. A power imbalance may arise because:

* In order to be diagnosed or treated a Service User may have to share personal information
* The staff member can influence the level of intimacy and/or physical contact during the induction to services.
* The staff member knows what constitutes appropriate professional practice whereas the Service User or Carer is in an unfamiliar situation and may not know what is appropriate.
* Where staff may be considering a relationship with a former Service User or Carer the dynamic of the pervious relationship may remain and influence the current relationship deeming it inappropriate.

It is the responsibility of staff members to be aware of the potential for the power imbalance and to maintain professional boundaries to protect themselves and their patients.

Failure to meet this responsibility may lead to formal disciplinary action.

THERAPUTIC INTERVENTIONS

- Service Users and Carers should have access to information detailing what they can expect from an induction to services.

- Clear communication helps to avoid misunderstandings. This should apply to all inductions/referrals.

- Information should be explicit and evidenced.

- Staff must communicate with Service Users and Carers in a way that is understood and takes into account particular communication requirements.

This information should cover the following:

* A description of boundaries – acceptable and unacceptable behaviour
* What is expected of the Service User and/or Carer.
* Contact details of the person whom they may turn in confidence to discuss any issue that may give them concern before, during and after services.

DISCLOSURE

- The relationship between staff and service users supportive role must focus solely upon meeting the needs of the service users.

- It is not established to build personal or social contacts for staff.

- Moving the focus of support from meeting service users needs towards meeting the employees own needs is an unacceptable abuse of power.

- On occasions a member of staff may develop an attachment towards a particular service user. In this instance the staff member should ensure that this does not lead to breach of professional boundaries. Staff should be encourages to discuss these kinds of difficulties with their manager or colleagues as part of practice supervision.

- Immediately a staff member thinks that there is a risk of potential breakdown of his/her professional boundaries he/she must bring it to the attention of the line manager. This disclosure should be possible without the automatic risk of disciplinary proceedings and staff should feel supported to discuss these feelings.

- Where it is then agreed that the staff member cannot continue to provide support the following should happen:

* Alternative staff member sought to provide support.
* Ensure a proper handover to another staff member takes place.
* The Service User should not be made to feel in the wrong as a result of care being handed over.

if staff feel a colleague is at risk of potential breakdown of professional boundaries they too have a duty to protect both Service User and staff member and should bring the matter to the line manager.

Staff members should alert their line manager if they have personal knowledge of a Service User who comes under their support/care.

Staff members who are related to a Service User who comes into the service must alert their line manager.

INAPPROPRIATE DISCLOSURE

- Gossip or hearsay should not feature as an aspect of service culture and should be effectively discourages among both staff and service users.

- Staff must never share personal details about other staff to service users.

- Staff must not divulge any personal information about themselves or other staff members.

- Staff must never discuss other staff members with service users except on issues relating to referral or support to another staff member or change of support worker.

- Social networking sites- staff must not interact with Service Users or Carers through social networking sites such as Facebook.

- Staff must never discuss Service Users with other Service Users.

- Where any of the above does occur the incident must be brought to the attention of the relevant line manager as soon as possible.

INFLUENCE

- Staff must be careful not to influence service users with their own beliefs and personal values.

- Staff should also be aware of their potential to influence vulnerable and/or impressionable service users.

- Although morality, religion and politics are common areas of conversation and service users may wish to discuss their views staff should be careful not to influence service users with their own beliefs or personal values.

 - Staff should be aware of their own potential to influence vulnerable service users and not promote their own religion or political views upon service users.

INFORMATION

- When staff offer advice to service users, they should provide service users with sufficient information to make informal choices.

- Staff should also be aware of where they do not have the knowledge or experience to give advice and refer the service user to the appropriate agency.

- Staff should be aware of the need to empower service users and encourage and enable them to achieve outcomes themselves.

- Staff should be realistic and honest about the service they provide to service users and not them false hope or make false promises.

CONCEALING INFORMATION FROM COLLEAUGUES ABOUT SERVICE USERS

This might include:

* Personal information
* The intention of the service user to self-harm or harm others
* Not reporting violent or critical incidents
* Safeguarding issues
* Not completing full records

CONTACT OUTSIDE OF THE WORKPLACE

- Staff should never give out their personal contact details to service users.

- Staff should not give out personal details of others to service users.

- Staff members should not allow service users to visit their homes.

- Staff must not encourage service users to develop relationships with the staff members relatives or friends.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

- Physical touching between staff and service users is to be discouraged and avoided except in cases of support e.g; helping someone to get in and out of the centre or accommodation.

- Service users may misinterpret physical contact as affection outside of the professional relationship. Service users may also see physical contact as favouritism for example where a staff member hugs a service user and not another,

- All staff should be aware of the risks of physical contact with a service user that is may be misunderstood and may lead to staff being vulnerable to allegations of inappropriate professional behaviour or worse.

- All staff should apply these principals so that there is consistency of practise within the organisation.

SEXUAL BOUNDARIES

- In order to maintain professional boundaries, and the trust of the service users and carer’s, staff members should not display sexualised behaviours or pursue a sexual or emotional relationship with a service user or a carer.

- Sexual boundaries are breached in the following way through the following behaviours:

* Criminal sexual acts
* Sexual relationships
* Other sexually motivated actions such as sexual humour and/or inappropriate comments

SEXUALISED BEHAVIOUR

* Asking for or accepting a date
* Sexual humour during examinations or consultations
* Inappropriate sexual or demanding comments or asking clinically irrelevant questions for example about their body or underwear, sexual orientation or sexual performance.
* Requesting details of sexual orientation, history or preferences that are not necessary or relevant.
* Asking for or accepting an offer of sex.
* Unplanned home visits with sexual intent.
* Taking or keeping photographs if the service user or their family that are not necessary.
* Telling service users about their own sexual problems, preferences or fantasies or disclosing other intimate details.

- Where a service user or carer displays sexualised behaviour towards a staff member the following actions should be carried out;

* Discuss the service users or carers feelings and try and determine an appropriate relationship (this should be recorded)
* Where the above is not possible the care of the service user /carer should be transferred to another staff member.
* Staff member should seek advice from the line manager.

MANAGING BOUNDARY ISSUES

- Staff may unwittingly be put in a position where their relationship with service users is compromised, or to be drawn into conversations or situations where their boundaries are being stretched or crossed.

- In some situations the fine line between good and bad practice may not always be obvious or clear.

- A staff member should seek the guidance of their line manager if they are unsure about the nature of the relationship developing with a service user, or if they need advice on how they intend to deal with a situation.

- Similarly if the immediate line manager requires advice they must consult their line manager and or the management committee.

- In situations where it has not been possible to access support in this way, any action, which has been taken, must be discussed with the line manager as soon as possible.

- Other people in you team, particularly those who are likely to work with he service user must also be aware a boundary has been blurred or crossed. This is so that they can maintain consistent practice with that service user.

- Boundary issues should be discussed with the line manager and within each team on a regular basis, and on occasions specific team training or facilitated discussion may be appropriate.

MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

- Information on boundary violations to be gathered through Risk and Assurance

- To be reported in Safeguarding form, with quarterly feedback to management committee in a report.

TRAINING

- Guidance from this policy will inform current Induction Programs and Safeguarding Training

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