

**Relationships at Work Policy**

**Purpose**

The Council values and relies on the professional integrity of its staff. We recognise that there may be occasions when a member of staff’s connection to an individual or an organisation may give rise to a real or perceived potential conflict of interest. In such circumstances this may lead to a perception of bias, favouritism, opportunity for personal gain, prejudice or potential breaches of confidentiality. Whilst the existence of a potential conflict of interest does not imply wrongdoing on anyone’s part, it is important that the Council manages this effectively and transparently to avoid any damage to its reputation or to the reputation of the staff involved.

All staff are expected to disclose personal relationships or connections with others which may give rise to real or perceived conflicts of interest at the earliest opportunity. For the purposes of this Policy, a personal relationship means either a close family relationship or a romantic, sexual or other intimate relationship. If unsure, further advice should be sought from the HR Service.

**Scope**

This Policy applies to all employees and workers of any type who are involved with providing Council services. This includes all agency workers, interim workers, and contractors for whom the separate policies and procedures of the company that they are engaged through may also apply.

For the purposes of this Policy all references to ‘staff’ within the Policy include all types of employees and workers.

**Relationships between staff members**

Where a relationship exists or develops between staff members which may lead to a real or perceived potential conflict of interest between their work responsibilities and their personal circumstances, the relationship must be disclosed to the line manager. This should be declared prior to the employment or assignment starting and for any new relationship, within one month of it commencing. We recognise that personal relationships at work are a normal part of life and we are committed to promoting a working environment based on dignity, trust and respect. A [disclosure form is available](https://intranet.guildford.gov.uk/media/35860/Staff-Personal-Relationship-Declaration-Form/doc/Staff_Personal_Relationship_Declaration_Form.docx?m=1705502208620) . Any information disclosed will be treated sensitively and in confidence.

Staff should not be in involved in any recruitment or selection process involving a person whom they have a relationship with. If this situation arises, any relationship to a candidate must be declared and the member of staff removed from the process and from any future line management responsibilities for that person.

Personal relationships between staff in inherently unequal positions where one party has influence, power or authority over the other in their professional roles are inappropriate in the workplace. This includes situations where one party has influence or power over the other’s conditions of employment or career progression.

**Relationships with councillors**

The Councils have a statutory obligation to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by their councillors and this standard is set out within the Councillors Code of Conduct [Guildford Borough Council Councillors Code of Conduct](https://democracy.guildford.gov.uk/documents/s30036/Part%205%20-%20Codes%20and%20Protocols.pdf).

Where a relationship exists or develops between staff members and councillors the relationship must be disclosed to the line manager. This should be declared prior to the employment or assignment starting and for any new relationship, within one month of it commencing. A [disclosure form is available](https://intranet.guildford.gov.uk/media/35860/Staff-Personal-Relationship-Declaration-Form/doc/Staff_Personal_Relationship_Declaration_Form.docx?m=1705502208620). Any information disclosed will be treated sensitively and in confidence.

**Disclosure of a Relationship**

If a disclosure is made to the line manager, they are responsible for ensuring that appropriate alternative arrangements are made with respect to line management and/or any other relevant work responsibilities. It is expected that arrangements will be put in place to avoid any potential conflict in relation to recruitment, selection, performance review, allowances and expenses claims, and any approval processes involving the person whom they have a relationship with. These alternative arrangements should be documented and held confidentially on the employee’s HR staffsite. Where it is not possible to alter the line management arrangements, the Council may decide to redeploy one party after consultation with all concerned parties. Any new role should be as similar as possible to the current role in terms of nature of the role, job requirements, status, pay and benefits and may be subject to a trial period. If, after having explored all available options, redeployment is not possible it may be necessary to terminate the employment of one of the parties.

If the relationship has come to an end or has broken down, the manager will need to review the existing arrangements and consider whether new arrangements need to be put in place to protect both parties.

Disclosure of relationships creates a transparent work environment that ensures professional respect and accountability for our staff whilst also maintaining public trust. Failure to disclose the existence of relationship which may lead to an actual, or perceived potential conflict of interest may result in disciplinary action.

**Conduct at work**

Employees who are in a relationship in the workplace are expected to conduct themselves professionally and be aware of their behaviour towards each other within the working environment. Intimate behaviour during work time such as holding hands, kissing, other close physical contact and discussions of an intimate or sexual nature are not permitted.

Staff must ensure that any personal relationship at work does not have an adverse effect on their work, give rise to a conflict of interest or provide any workplace advantage. Discussions taking place in the workplace should not be overly personal and disagreements should not be brought into the workplace.

All confidential information must be protected at all times and should not be discussed with the other person. A breach of confidentiality will be treated very seriously and will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

**Relationships between staff and business associates**

Staff are required to disclose any personal or business relationship with an organisation or individual which may give rise to an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest. This disclosure is required to ensure that the existence of any such relationship does not influence any decisions taken on behalf of the Council or create the opportunity for an employee to make a personal gain from a business decision.

If a disclosure is made, the Council will consider whether appropriate measures are required to be put in pace to protect the integrity and interests of all parties. A disclosure of this type should be declared on the form available here [Register of External Interests Form](https://www.guildford.gov.uk/media/28233/Register-of-external-interests/pdf/Register_of_External_Interests_Form.pdf?m=636676910296030000) .

**Related Policies and Guidance Documents**

The Council has a Code of Conduct within its Constitution which sets out the standards of conduct expected of employees and staff should familiarise themselves with this Code. [Code of Conduct - extract from the Constitution](https://intranet.guildford.gov.uk/media/30661/Code-of-Conduct-from-the-Constitution/doc/Code_of_conduct_for_staff_-_extract_from_the_Constitution.doc?m=637571171339430000)

Guidance notes are available on the rules relating to the acceptance of hospitality and gifts and the requirement to disclose any external interests and connections. [Hospitality, Gifts and External Interests Guidance](https://intranet.guildford.gov.uk/media/30706/Hospitality-Gifts-and-External-Interests-Guidance/doc/Hospitality_and_Gifts_and_External_Interests_Guidance_Notes.doc?m=637068330958630000) The declaration of external interests or connections should be made on this form. [Register of External Interests Form](https://www.guildford.gov.uk/media/28233/Register-of-external-interests/pdf/Register_of_External_Interests_Form.pdf?m=636676910296030000)