



# Croydon Mencap

## Professional Boundaries Policy

### Version Control

Published on:	July 2017	Alan Avis
Approved by:	Board of Trustees	
Review date:	July 2019	
Review period:	Every 2 years	

## Professional Boundaries

### Aims

- To ensure that Croydon Mencap services are all delivered in a professional manner that is safe for people we support.
- To provide staff with guidance on the delivery of a service that demonstrates that it cares for its members while also treating them with dignity and respect.
- To safeguard service users (*referred to in this Policy as members*)
- To ensure Croydon Mencap complies with legal responsibilities and best practice in all its activities with regards to professional boundaries.

### Introduction

Croydon Mencap is committed to delivering services that demonstrate that they care for the members while also treating them with dignity and respect. We recognise that maintaining appropriate professional boundaries has a vital role to play in protecting service users, as well as staff and volunteers. We also recognise the vulnerability of our services users, both adults and children and that appropriate professional boundaries can help to ensure their vulnerabilities are protected as far as possible.

Croydon Mencap recognises the importance of staff and volunteers being able to discuss appropriate behaviour in an open and constructive environment to enable us to monitor and improve on our practice and ensure the safety of all parties concerned. Appropriate boundaries ensure that Croydon Mencap staff can act as friendly professionals, but not as professional friends. We expect staff and volunteers to show that they care for members' well-being, whilst protecting people from abuse and/ or allegations which can have very serious consequences.

### Scope

This policy refers to all staff and volunteers and outlines how Croydon Mencap expects them to interact with adult members and child service users. This interaction includes physical contact, language, sharing personal information and social contact.

## Physical contact

Any form of physical contact or interaction with children and adults we support could be perceived as assault or abuse. Staff must therefore ensure that physical contact only takes place:

- As part of the care that they need.
- As an integral part of the service we offer.
- As part of an intervention during a crisis situation, e.g. to save life, or avoid serious injury. In this circumstance, common law allows for intervention without consent.

Whilst members may have physical contact with family, friends and partners, there are only specific, limited circumstances where this is appropriate with professional carers, whether paid or voluntary. These circumstances will arise as a result of the support a person needs and as an integral part of service delivery, for example:

- During the provision of personal care.
- To help people with an activity that needs hands on support e.g. Sport or Dancing.
- Physio or other therapy from trained professionals.
- Agreed contact during a time of stress, such as immediately after a seizure or other first aid situation.
- As part of a communication technique

**It is essential that staff and volunteers maintain appropriate physical boundaries with both adults and children we support. Contact from staff or volunteers such as cuddling, sitting on laps or giving kisses is regarded as inappropriate.**

If a service user seeks physical contact with staff or volunteers, e.g. when distressed, staff and volunteers should establish an appropriate boundary as soon as possible, without making the service user feel they have done something wrong. If a service user is distressed, it may be appropriate to console them with a touch on the arm, whilst offering support through presence (time and attention), tone of voice, or by offering tissues if they are tearful. If a member attempts to hug a member of staff, it may be appropriate to respond with a brief friendly hug and then establish an appropriate boundary as soon as possible. Staff should never initiate hugs with members.

## Language

The language used with adults and children must be appropriate, accessible and age-appropriate. Service users should be referred to their names, which should not be shortened or substituted with a nickname unless they or their parent / carer tell us they prefer this. Terms of endearment such as Mate, Love, Pet, Sweetheart should not be used.

### **Sharing Personal Information**

Croydon Mencap staff and volunteers should not share personal information, such as;

- home or mobile telephone number
- home address
- personal e-mail
- social media account details

with service users, unless there is a relationship that exists outside of Croydon Mencap e.g. as a family member or working independently as a p.a. for a service user.

Where the above applies, the staff / volunteer members' line manager must be made aware of this and this must be recorded in the member's files.

Staff and volunteers should also be cautious about discussing their personal lives: holidays, families; friends; etc. Staff should be aware of the impact of sharing this information, e.g. in relation to the possible limitations of service users' own life experiences and opportunities. Taking care in this area can also help service users learn and understand appropriate boundaries for themselves, e.g. around providing or asking for information from strangers.

### **Social contact**

Croydon Mencap staff and volunteers should not:

- visit people in their own homes outside of their work role;
- invite service users to their home;

unless they have a relationship that exists outside of Croydon Mencap, e.g. as a family member or working independently as a Personal Assistant for a service user.

In such circumstances, staff/ volunteers must discuss this with their line manager and this can be recorded in the member's notes.

There may be occasions when a staff member is invited to attend service users' parties and events outside of their work role; the advisability of accepting such invitations should first be discussed with the Operations Manager or CEO if OM is not available.

### Gifts

Croydon Mencap staff/volunteers should not:

- Give gifts or money to service users
- Accept money from service users
- Accept gifts from service users

If refusing a gift from a service user could cause offence, then the staff member/volunteer should seek advice from their line manager or the Operations Manager.

**Responsibilities**

Trustees

- To approve and review the policy every two years.
- To take reasonable steps to satisfy themselves that the policy is being implemented.

Senior staff

- To communicate the policy to other staff and volunteers and to ensure it is being implemented correctly.
- To engage constructively and provide further advice and support to staff and volunteers on issues related professional boundaries
- To monitor performance of the policy and report to trustees

All staff and volunteers

- To act in accordance with the policy
- To engage constructively with colleagues and to seek advice and support from and raise concerns with senior staff at the earliest opportunity.

**Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees of Croydon Mencap**

**Chairperson: Sue Wragg**

**Date:**

**Reviews:**

**2019**

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**2021**

**Signed:**

**Date:**