

Policy regarding Private Direct Work with Children and Families

The aim of this document is to ensure clarity regarding the position of Hammersmith and Fulham, Westminster City Council and the Royal Borough Kensington and Chelsea Children's Services regarding the continuation of work with Children, Young People or Families when a member of staff has left the Local Authority.

Incidents have occurred whereby families have requested, or staff members have offered, to continue undertaking direct/ therapeutic work once they have ceased to be employed by the Local Authority. This has been offered on both a voluntary basis and for payment.

Such arrangements contravene both the Hammersmith and Fulham, Westminster City Council and Royal Borough Kensington and Chelsea Code of Conduct for Employees and the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy Code of Ethics and Professional Practice.

It is essential for staff to be clear that offering or accepting to work with families they have met during their employment within the Local Authority is a serious breach of professional standards and is not permitted.

This is regardless of how and when a employee/ former employee is contacted and approached. If for example a family an individual has worked with previously contacts them via a private website/Social Media address it is the responsibility of the employee/ former employee to decline with a clear explanation.

It is appreciated that many families establish strong and beneficial relationships with members of staff during their work together and seek to continue working together once the staff member has left the organisation. However, it is imperative that the reasons this is not permitted are explained clearly to families, and other provision suggested or arranged.

In rare circumstances, the Local Authority may seek to re employ a ex member of staff to carry out a designated piece of work with a family. An example would be if a ex member of staff has a pre existing professional relationship with a family and they can demonstrate a specific skills set necessary to undertake an agreed intervention.

In these instances, a formal contract will be organised in consultation with the relevant Head of Service and Human Resources. This work would be commissioned, overseen, and financed by the Local Authority, with this arrangement being clearly explained to the family and professional network.

In exceptional circumstances, the need to exercise some flexibility regarding this policy may be necessary to promote the welfare of a child/ young person. In these circumstances a decision will be made by the Assistant Director of Children's Services and a relevant plan agreed.

It is understood that terminating direct work with families/ young people in need can be a challenging process. The following practice points aim to assist in the management of this

issue with a focus on assisting staff and families manage endings in a responsible and supported manner.

- This policy should be disseminated to all staff members and be highlighted in relevant team meetings/ all service meetings etc.
- It is important all staff members are aware of this policy so there is a shared expectation/ understanding across disciplines and service areas.
- Any staff member approached by a family member to undertake private work should raise this with their manager to ensure there are supported and advised effectively.
- Any information suggesting this policy has been breached or is likely to be breached should be shared with a team manager and the Head of Clinical Practice as soon as possible.
- At the point a staff member resigns, a plan should be made for ending all work with families, including messaging to families, and seeking alternative provision. This policy should be clearly reiterated during the conversation to ensure the staff member is clear regarding expectations.
- Supervisory conversations should promote discussion regarding the emotional impact of ending work, including the management of requests for ongoing input from family members.
- Any discussions regarding reemploying former members of staff should be shared with the relevant Head of Service and HR representatives to ascertain the viability of the proposal.

The intention in creating this policy is to ensure rigorous standards of fairness, transparency and professional ethics are always upheld and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of both members of staff and the families we work with. Comments and feedback regarding this policy are welcomed and appreciated.

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