

Close Personal Relationships Policy



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1 Introduction

Chelmsford City Council recognises that people who work together may have or form close personal relationships at work and expects individuals to behave in an appropriate, professional and responsible way at work ensuring that any close personal relationships do not compromise this.

Individuals in close personal relationships must be open and transparent about their relationship.

They must not be involved in any decisions on recruitment, discipline, promotion or pay adjustments.

Where a close personal relationship exists between two individuals involved in financial transactions, the Council's Financial Regulations should be followed.

Individuals must not be involved in award of contracts, contract monitoring or orders with any contractor or supplier with whom they have a close personal relationship.

This policy aims to support managers in dealing sensitively but effectively where individuals have or form close personal relationships at work.

This process will be operated in a non-discriminatory and consistent way and in accordance with the Council's Diversity, Equality and Inclusion policy.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the Council.

3 Responsibilities

Manager

- To carefully consider any close personal relationships that exist or are formed in their work area and work with HR to put appropriate steps in place to manage any actual or potential conflicts in line with this policy
- Disclose any close personal relationships with work colleagues on appointment and if they form during employment

- Behave in an appropriate, professional and responsible way at work, ensuring that any close personal relationships do not compromise this
- To ensure that they are not involved with any contractual matters with suppliers or contractors with whom they have a close personal relationship

Employees/workers

- Disclose any close personal relationships with work colleagues on appointment and if they form during employment
- Behave in an appropriate, professional and responsible way at work, ensuring that any close personal relationships do not compromise this
- To ensure that they are not involved with any contractual matters with suppliers or contractors with whom they have a close personal relationship

Human Resources

- Support the fair and consistent application of this policy
- Work with managers and employees to ensure that any actual or potential conflicts of interest are managed effectively

4 Definition of a Close Personal Relationship

Close personal relationships are defined as:

- Employees who are married, dating, in a partnership or co-habiting arrangement or other similar arrangement
- Immediate family members e.g. grandparents, parents, children or siblings
- Other extended family relationships e.g. aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews
- Close friendships i.e. frequent intentional contact outside of a work setting and or working hours, that goes beyond professional interactions or family friendships
- Business associates (outside of the Council)
- This list is not exhaustive and Individuals are expected to use their judgement as to whether a friendship or relationship has developed to the extent that it could be described as a close personal relationship, which could give rise to the issues that this policy seeks to address. In these circumstances the relationship should be disclosed.

5 Factors to consider when individuals are in a close personal relationship

Close personal relationships at work could have or be perceived to have an impact on a variety of aspects of work, depending on the nature of the relationship and the job roles. The following provides an overview of the aspects of work that the Council will consider when a close personal relationship is declared:

- Provision for alternative supervision / management arrangement to avoid any conflict of interest on appraisal, pay, promotion and discipline issues
- Potential for sharing any confidential or sensitive information
- Potential for any other conflict of interest (may not be in same team but could work on same things)
- Any impact on operational issues such as shift or working patterns or annual leave
- Any impact on financial regulations
- Any impact on other team members and the public, including issues relating to trust and confidence and the Council's public image

6 Recruitment and Appointment

6.1 Participation in the recruitment process

An employee must not be involved in any appointment process where they have a close personal relationship with any applicant.

6.2 Requirement to disclose a close personal relationship on application

All applicants for roles at Chelmsford City Council are required to disclose and provide details on their application form of any close personal relationships with any employee of the Council or elected member.

6.3 When a relationship is declared during the application process.

The employee concerned must not be involved in any part of the recruitment process. The implications of the relationship may be discussed during the selection. The recruitment panel would consider relevant issues outlined in section 5.

6.4 Appointment

Where, the recruiting manager considers that an applicant could be recruited and has a declared close personal relationship, with the factors at section 5 fully considered via a risk assessment. the appointment must be cleared by the Service Manager / Director (as appropriate) who will sign the risk assessment. A written record of the authorisation and the risk assessment will be kept with the candidate's original application on their personal file.

7 Close Personal Relationships formed during employment

7.1 Requirement to disclose a close personal relationship at work

Where a close personal relationship is formed between individuals at work, this should be disclosed immediately using the declaration of interest form (available on the Intranet). This is to avoid any actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

7.2 Relationship between an individual and their manager

Where a close personal relationship is formed between an individual and their manager or senior reporting manager, this should be declared. The appropriate senior officer in consultation with HR, will, where possible, make alternative supervision/ management arrangement to avoid any conflict of interest on recruitment, appraisal, pay, promotion and discipline issues, and will explore relevant issues outlined in section 5 with both parties. Expectations should be clearly defined and managed appropriately. Where issues cannot be effectively managed, refer to section 8.

7.3 Relationship between colleagues

Where a close personal relationship is formed between colleagues at the Council (with no line management or supervisory relationship). If the two colleagues are in the same team, their manager should explore relevant issues as outlined in section 5 with both employees. If the colleagues are in different teams, their individual managers should explore any relevant issues with each employee as outlined in section 5. Where necessary, expectations should be clearly defined and managed appropriately. Where issues cannot be effectively managed, refer to section 8.

The risk assessment template at Appendix A can be used by managers when assessing any potential risks associated with the relationships outlined in Section 7. Strict confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the nature of risk assessments required and potential adjustments to working practices, however Managers should only disclose information to others where this is necessary and appropriate.

8 When issues cannot be managed effectively, or a relationship breaks down

When any issues identified cannot be managed effectively, or a relationship breaks down the manager should contact their HR Business partner. The situation will be addressed sensitively with individuals with a view to resolving the issues. Care will be taken to avoid discrimination, ensuring the views of the individuals concerned are balanced with issues presenting and the needs of the service.

9 Impact on other colleagues

Any employee who feels they are affected by a close personal relationship at work involving other colleagues, should approach in confidence their manager or their HR Business Partner to explain their concerns.

10 Financial Regulations

Where a close personal relationship exists between two individuals involved in financial transactions, Managers must ensure that appropriate financial safeguards are put in place and that there is clear and appropriate delegation of responsibilities and separation of duties in line with the Council's Financial Regulations.

11 Relationships with Contractors or Suppliers

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, individuals must disclose in writing any financial or non financial interest which may affect or be considered to affect their duties. They must not be involved in award of contracts, contract monitoring or orders with any contractor or supplier with whom they have a close personal relationship.

12 Links to Other Policies and Procedures

1. Code of Conduct
2. Safer Recruitment Policy

Appendix A

Close Personal Relationship Risk Assessment Template

Employee Name/s Please list the names of the individuals this risk assessment relates to, their job title/s and the Service they work in		
Name	Job title	Service

Nature of relationship	
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Potential Risks	Please answer the question and provide any necessary detail. Please detail if any identified risk could be mitigated and how.
Is there the potential for sharing any confidential or sensitive information	
Is there the potential for any other conflict of interest (may not be in same team	

but could work on same things)	
What is the impact on operational issues such as shift or working patterns or annual leave	
What is the impact on financial regulations	
What is the impact on other team members and the public, including issues relating to trust and confidence and the Council's public image	
Is it necessary to consider alternative supervision / management arrangement to avoid any conflict of interest on appraisal, pay, promotion and discipline issues	
Are there any conflicts in respect of existing or pending contracts, contract	

awards, contract monitoring or orders with any contractor or supplier	
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Can all identified risks be effectively mitigated: Yes / No

If you have selected no, please contact your HR Business Partner to discuss.

Signed:

Employee:

Date:

Line Manager:

Date:

Service Manager:

Date: