



Blue Flamingo Community Hub CIC

Professional Boundaries and Personal Relationships Policy

Policy Owner: Blue Flamingo Community Hub CIC

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Designated Safeguarding Lead: Erin Singleton

Purpose

Blue Flamingo aims to provide a familiar and friendly environment. We recognize that the caring nature of our team means it is natural for volunteers and staff to forge friendships with our members. We don't discourage this; in fact, these genuine connections are the heart of what we do. However, to protect the safety of our members and the wellbeing of our volunteers, we maintain clear professional boundaries. This ensures that support remains consistent, objective and safe for everyone involved.

Why Boundaries Matter

- **Consistency:** Members should feel supported by the organisation as a whole, rather than becoming reliant on one specific individual.
- **Power Balance:** As volunteers, we hold a position of trust. Maintaining boundaries prevents members from feeling pressured or becoming overly dependent on a single person.
- **Inclusion:** We must interact with all members in a way that demonstrates each person is important. No one should feel left out because exclusive attention is being given to one person.
- **Objectivity:** It is difficult to enforce Hub rules or provide unbiased support if a personal friendship or private 'secret' creates blurred lines.

Nurturing Friendships with Transparency

If a friendship naturally develops to the point where you wish to exchange phone numbers or meet outside of sessions, we simply ask that you make this known to the ED. This culture of transparency protects everyone:

- **Support:** If a member you are friends with has a crisis, we can support *you* in handling that situation.
- **Safety:** It protects you from misunderstandings or allegations by ensuring the relationship is known to the Board.
- **Pre-existing Relationships:** If you already know a member personally (e.g., a neighbour or family friend) before they join, please disclose this to the ED or SC. We will ensure you aren't the primary signposter for that individual to avoid conflicts of interest.

Standards of Conduct

To keep the Hub a professional and safe environment, the following rules apply to all staff and volunteers:

- **During Hub Hours:** Your primary role is to be available to all members. Staff and volunteers should not openly have a favourite, or bring personal disagreements into the Hub.
- **Personal Details:** Do not share personal contact details (home addresses or private emails) with members unless it has been made known to the ED.
- **Social Media:** If you 'friend' or follow members on personal social media accounts, please do this with respect for privacy and, again, make this known to the ED. Please remember that as a representative of Blue Flamingo, your conduct outside of sessions—including your social media activity—can directly impact how members and the wider public view our organisation. We ask that you conduct yourself appropriately and avoid posts that could bring the Hub's reputation for positivity and inclusion into disrepute. To protect member privacy and adhere to GDPR, volunteers must not post images taken during Hub sessions on their personal social media accounts. All session photography should be handled via official Hub devices only.
- **Financial Transactions:** Never lend money to, borrow money from, or enter into any financial or business arrangements with members. This has the potential of putting you at risk of allegations, so it's about protecting yourself as much as protecting the member.

Managing Sensitive Information & 'Secrets'

We prioritize member privacy, but we must never promise absolute secrecy.

- **Be Transparent:** If a member shares a safeguarding concern, gently interrupt and say: *'I want to listen, but if I am worried about your safety, I must share this with our Safeguarding Lead so we can support you properly.'*
- **The 'Need to Know' Principle:** Sensitive info should only be discussed with the ED or SC—never with other volunteers, your family or other members.

- **Avoid Private Vowing:** Never promise you 'won't tell anyone.' This creates an unsafe emotional burden for you and could break safeguarding guidelines.
- **Record Factually:** Report details to the ED using the Concern & Incident Log format, sticking to what was said and observed.

Reporting Concerns

If you feel a member is becoming over-reliant on you, is overstepping an emotional or physical boundary, or if you feel a personal 'duty' to a member outside of Hub hours that feels overwhelming, you must discuss this with the ED immediately. This is not a sign of failure—it is the mark of a responsible volunteer seeking support to maintain a healthy and sustainable boundary.