

KEY EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION BRIEFING

ISSUE 9: DECEMBER 2016



NEW POLICY



POLICY REVIEW



REGULAR REMINDER

MANAGING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK

POLICY OVERVIEW

It is acknowledged that many close personal relationships are formed at work. In the majority of cases, this is unlikely to give rise to any issues for the council. However, the council recognises that in some cases the potential for conflict of interest can arise or be perceived by others to arise.

The council's Guidance on [Managing Personal Relationships at Work](#) is aimed at assisting managers to deal effectively with situations where employees have, or form, close personal relationships with colleagues. It also provides employees with advice on how to avoid potential conflicts of interest so that they can protect themselves from the problems that can arise in these circumstances.

KEY INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES

- Employees engaged in a close personal relationship with a work colleague must ensure that their actions do not breach the provisions of the council's [Code of Conduct](#) for employees.
- The Code specifies that;
 - *'As an employee of West Lothian Council, you must not allow any private interest to influence your decisions'.*
 - *'You must not use your position to further your own interests or the interests of others who do not have a right to benefit under the council's policies'.*
 - *'If you are involved in the recruitment and selection process and have any kind of relationship which might affect your ability to be impartial, that relationship must be declared to your line manager. Your line manager will decide whether you can participate in the recruitment and selection process. The same procedure must be followed in other personnel procedures such as grievance and disciplinary procedures, job evaluation or career progression schemes'.*

- The council's Nominated Officers' Disciplinary Guidance states:

'In the interest of a fair and transparent process, the officer appointed to investigate a complaint must have the scope and authority to act independently of the Nominated Officer and should not be directly line managed by that person nor compromised through personal friendship'.

- Conflicts of interest are of particular concern where an employee has authority to exert power or influence over matters in relation to a colleague with whom they have a close personal relationship. An employee who is potentially in that position and who is engaged in a close personal relationship with a colleague (in the same team or within a related area) should advise his/her line manager. Where the personal relationship is with an employee's line manager, the declaration should be made to their line manager's superior. The line manager will consider any potential risks or conflicts of interest and advise of the action that should be taken as a result.
- Employees engaged in a close personal relationship with a colleague must conduct themselves professionally at all times while at work. Overt displays of affection or disagreements which might cause others discomfort or embarrassment must be avoided.
- Where a personal relationship breaks down, employees may have to continue working together and professional conduct must be maintained despite tensions that may exist.
- For those employees engaged in close personal relationships, it is essential that confidentially with the council's clients/customers and other fellow work colleagues is maintained.

ROLL OUT ARRANGEMENTS

- Services should ensure that records are kept of the date that employee briefings were conducted and the employees who attended. Those records may be subject to internal audit at any given time to ensure that council employment policies are being properly disseminated throughout services.
- Employees should be encouraged to read the full Personal Relationships at Work Guidance available on Mytoolkit and accessible from work and home at:
- <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/13825/Code-of-Conduct-Personal-Relationships-Guidance/pdf/CodeOfConductPersonalRelationshipsGuidance.pdf>