

Code of practice

Introduction

St Anne's mission statement is "Provide quality support, care and housing services; promote independence, opportunity and inclusion". Clients and their families and other stakeholders are entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct, person centred approaches and professionalism from all of St Anne's staff at all times.

All staff, whether involved in direct delivery of services or working in central support are expected to behave courteously and with respect to clients, colleagues and external contacts. There are however particular requirements regarding relationships with clients which are covered by this code, in addition to more general requirements about conduct which are applicable to all staff.

This code of practice describes appropriate behaviours for staff at all levels and in all settings. It is not a replacement for the detailed procedures in the Staff Manual but provides an overview of the expectations of St Anne's staff.

Our work practices should always be guided by, and focused on, what is in the best interests of clients as agreed within their support plan.

St Anne's has adopted the General Social Care Council (GSCC) Code of Practice, a copy of which will be provided to all new staff joining the organisation. This highlights the expectations of social care workers. St Anne's has also adopted the principles contained in the National Housing Federation model Code of Conduct. In addition, staff in nursing services are expected to comply with the Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC) Code of Conduct as part of their professional registration.

Professional Conduct and Boundaries

Staff are expected to work in a friendly and courteous way with clients whilst recognising that the professional relationship is based on staff being employed within a contract of employment and paid a salary to provide a service. This is what makes the professional relationship between a member of St Anne's staff and the clients of the organisation different to a social or personal friendship or relationship. The way staff relate to and behave with clients is at the heart of providing person centred approaches. Staff must ensure at all times that what they are doing or plan to do is for the benefit of the client and in line with their support plan. Whilst this may seem very straightforward there are a number of issues that need to be explored. No document or list of principles of practice can be exhaustive; however staff's attention is drawn to the following:

- As a worker you have access to lots of personal information about clients which must be treated in confidence and with respect. However you need to think carefully about what sort of personal information you disclose about yourself and should not give out your personal telephone number, address or any other contact details (eg social networking or messaging addresses) to clients. The following questions may help you decide on whether the information to be shared is appropriate:
- What is the purpose of sharing this information?
- Can you demonstrate that it is of benefit to the client and fits with their support plan?

- Are there any potential consequences that may arise if it is misused?
- Would you be comfortable for your manager to know that you are sharing this information?

If you are unsure then discuss this in supervision or at a team meeting

Information about clients must always be treated as confidential. Sharing such information may only take place according to the guidelines set out in the Confidentiality section of the Staff Manual.

- It is not appropriate for clients to visit the home of a member of staff.
- Remember that a clients' home is just that – their home and it is for them to decide who they invite to visit. Staff must not take members of their family, including children, or their friends or pets into client's homes unless this has been agreed as part of someone's person centred plan and properly risk assessed.
- St Anne's staff have a huge privilege in being entrusted to provide care and support for people. With that privilege comes a responsibility to make sure that the relationship is always about the clients best interests, meeting their needs and wishes as expressed in their support plan.

St Anne's staff must not enter into inappropriate personal relationships with clients who are receiving support from St Anne's or who have been discharged from or left any of St Anne's services and who may still be vulnerable. Disciplinary action will be taken against employees where there is evidence that a personal relationship has been formed with a client who is receiving or has received support from St Anne's. It will be for the member of staff during the course of the investigation to show that he or she has not abused or exploited any professional relationship.

Staff have a responsibility to dress and present themselves in an appropriate and professional manner whilst at work. Although there is no official dress code, employees are expected to be fully clothed at all times and not to wear clothing which is revealing or could be seen to be provocative in any way (eg with inappropriate slogans, logos or is overly revealing). Managers will use their discretion and will deal with any such issues informally wherever possible, taking into account the needs and requirements of their service.

Risk taking (See "Client risk assessment" section in the Staff Manual and Section 4 of GSCC Code of Practice)

- Taking risks is an integral part of our lives and by removing risk we seriously diminish the quality of a person's life. It should be acknowledged that a society which enables people to make choices can never be risk free.
- Risks should be evaluated and the taking of well considered risks will be supported. Irresponsible and careless risk taking will not.
- However staff should not be over-protective. Any decisions or discussions must be clearly focused on the client. If you are thinking of dissuading someone you support from attempting a new experience ask yourself whose needs are you considering?

- If in doubt about risk taking then check with your manager.

Record keeping

- Certain records are required by regulations.
- Before making any written record ask yourself 'is it necessary to record it'? If a record is necessary make sure that it is legible, factual (rather than opinion), accurate and professional in style and content. Imagine that the person you are writing about is sat reading what you are writing and ask yourself "would I be happy for the person or their advocate to read this record?" Remember that clients can ask to see their files at any time. Never use judgmental language.

Integrity

- All decisions must be based on the needs of the client as detailed in their support plan and based on the values, mission and core principles of St Anne's Community Services.
- Decisions must never be influenced by potential personal gain (financial, material benefit, physical, sexual or emotional) to yourself, your colleagues, your family or friends.
- Do not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations (e.g. do not accept perks or favours from suppliers or contractors - see Avoiding financial gains or gains in kind in the Staff Manual.)
- Declare any private interests relating to your duties. Take steps to resolve any conflicts in a way that is lawful and protects the values, mission and reputation of St Anne's. Declaration forms are available from the Planning and Administration Director at Head Office.
- Ensure you comply with St Anne's Equality and Diversity and Dignity at Work policies at all times. See Staff Manual.

Communications with others

- Remember you are an ambassador for St Anne's when you talk to people on behalf of clients or about the organisation. This contact may be with relatives, visitors, other professionals, trades people, etc.
- Be positive about St Anne's and your work in all your contact with others.
- Convey a positive and courteous approach in all communication with other people, inside and outside the organisation. For example, when you answer the telephone say who you are and where you work. Present a confident and helpful manner. If you are responding to an email or letter, re-read it before you send it to make sure it is friendly and professional in tone. If you answer the door because it is not possible for clients to do so, present a friendly and professional manner. Remember you might be someone's first experience of St Anne's and first impressions are lasting impressions.

- Be particularly careful about giving information over the telephone to someone you do not know. Take their number and call back to check their identity. If in doubt seek advice from your manager or another manager within St Anne's.
- If you have concerns or issues about your workplace, the service, or the organisation, try to resolve them by discussing with your manager or using the various procedural mechanisms available to all staff. It is never appropriate to 'unload' your concerns on to external agencies. If you are seeking general support from family and friends, remember never to share confidential information about clients or colleagues.

Respect

- Clients must be treated with respect at all times.
- When you are first introduced to someone ask them how they prefer to be addressed? Do not assume people are happy to be called by their first name. • When telephoning or writing on behalf of a client, ask how they prefer to be referred to. They may choose to use a formal mode of address i.e. Mr, Mrs, Ms or Miss or their full name.
- Be careful if using terms of endearment as they can sound patronising (eg darling, sweetheart etc).
- Do not use derogatory terms. If you hear a colleague using a derogatory term to describe a client or clients in general, you should challenge them in an appropriate manner. If you don't challenge you are effectively agreeing with what is being said. An important part of your role is to promote a positive image of clients.
- Be careful about making jokes about a client even if they appear to share the joke. Jokes which belittle or stereotype people must never be made.
- Do not talk (including using sign language or Makaton) in front of people as if they are not present. Listen to what people are saying and give them time to respond. Remain alert to 'body language', tone of voice etc.
- When accompanying a client to an appointment do not speak on their behalf unless they have specifically asked you to. Support and enable the client to speak for themselves wherever possible. Encourage others to address the client directly wherever possible.
- If you need to present a point of view that is different to that of the client then be clear and honest about your intentions before sharing your observations.
- The general public will be influenced in their judgement of clients by the staff who are with them or working on their behalf. It is important therefore that staff maintain appropriate standards of dress, hygiene, attitude and behaviour at all times. This is also about showing respect for clients.
- Ensure you safeguard the property of clients whilst undertaking care or support tasks.
- Report any loss or damage to property whilst providing care or support.

Privacy (See "Personal privacy" in the Staff Manual)

Avoid any unnecessary invasion of privacy and remain sensitive to a person's right to keep personal information private.

Leadership

All staff can provide a positive role model for other staff members through supporting and promoting this code of practice. This sets the cultural tone for the organisation which must be based on the highest standards of professional conduct at all times.