Staff Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries Policy

Supportive Bridge Ltd | Community Support and Healthcare Staffing | Bradford, England

POLICY AT A GLANCE

- **You are there as a professional, not as a friend or family member.** Warmth is good; blurred boundaries are not.
- **Never accept money, gifts, tips or anything in a will.** Say thank you, explain you are not allowed, and tell the office.
- **Never lend or borrow money,** in either direction, however small and however kindly meant.
- **No private work.** Do not work privately for anyone you support through us, or accept work arranged directly with them or their family.
- **Keep personal life separate:** no personal phone number, no social media friending, no lifts in your own car unless it is agreed and insured.
- **No relationships** of a sexual or romantic nature with anyone we support. This is always gross misconduct.
- **Phones away.** Personal calls, messages, photos and social media do not belong on a shift.
- **If something feels awkward, tell your manager.** Boundaries slip gradually, and raising it early protects you as much as the person.

SERVICE DETAILS (fill in before issuing)

Registered Manager	
Nominated Individual	
Office phone	
Out-of-hours / on-call number	
Date issued	
Next review date	

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

1. PURPOSE

1.1 This policy sets out the standards of behaviour Supportive Bridge Ltd ("Supportive Bridge", "we", "us") expects from everyone who works for us, and explains professional boundaries: the line between being warm and human, and becoming personally involved in a way that puts the person, you or the company at risk.

1.2 It reflects Regulation 19 (Fit and proper persons employed) and Regulation 13 (Safeguarding) of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, and the Code of Conduct for Healthcare Support Workers and Adult Social Care Workers in England.

1.3 Our workers spend long periods alone with people in their own homes, often the same person several times a week. Genuine affection develops, and that is a good thing. Boundaries are not about being cold. They are about making sure the relationship stays safe for everyone, especially when no one else is watching.

2. SCOPE

2.1 Supportive Bridge Ltd operates two arms, and this policy applies to both: our **healthcare staffing service**, supplying care and support workers to care homes, hospitals and other providers; and our **community support service**, where our own support workers visit adults and older people in their own homes, including council housing, on morning and evening shifts, to support them with daily living.

2.2 Supportive Bridge does **not** provide personal care. Personal care is a regulated activity under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and we will provide it only if and when we are registered with the Care Quality Commission. Our support workers provide non-personal support such as companionship, meal preparation, shopping, domestic help, prompting, and support to get out and about. This policy is written to meet both local authority provider assurance requirements and the standards we will be assessed against at CQC registration.

2.3 This policy applies to everyone who works for us in any capacity, on shift and off, wherever conduct affects the people we support, our reputation or the trust placed in us. It applies while working in a client organisation as well as in our own service.

2.4 Breaches may lead to action under our Disciplinary Policy. Some breaches listed here are gross misconduct and may lead to dismissal without notice, a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and, where a crime has been committed, to the police.

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

3. OUR SIX STANDARDS

Standard	What it means
1. Be accountable	Take responsibility for what you do and do not do. Work within the support plan and within your training. Never do a task you have not been trained and signed off for, however much you are asked.
2. Respect people	Treat everyone with dignity, patience and courtesy. Respect their home, their belongings, their routines, their culture and their choices, including choices you disagree with.
3. Work in the person's interests	Put the person first, not what is quickest or easiest for you. Support independence rather than doing everything for them.
4. Protect confidentiality	Keep what you learn private. Share only with people who need to know. Never discuss one person with another, and never post anything about work.
5. Be reliable and honest	Turn up on time, stay the full shift, do what you said you would, record it truthfully, and admit mistakes straight away.
6. Speak up	Report poor practice, abuse, risk and your own errors. Never stay silent to protect a colleague or yourself.

4. PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

4.1 A professional boundary is the line between a working relationship and a personal one. Crossing it rarely happens in one big step. It usually starts with small kindnesses, and the person and the worker can both feel it is harmless right up to the point where real harm is done.

Warning signs that a boundary is slipping

- spending extra unpaid time at one person's home, or visiting on days off;
- feeling that you are the only one who really understands or can help them;
- sharing your personal problems with the person, or relying on them for emotional support;
- keeping something about the person from your manager, or agreeing to keep a secret;
- doing tasks outside the support plan because you feel sorry for them;
- giving or receiving gifts, money, food or favours;
- feeling uncomfortable about something but not wanting to mention it;
- being treated as a family member, or referring to the person as family.

4.2 If you notice any of these, tell your manager. Doing so is a sign of professionalism, not failure. Managers will discuss it supportively and help you re-set the boundary. Nobody is disciplined for raising it early.

5. MONEY, GIFTS AND PROPERTY

5.1 Financial abuse is one of the most common forms of abuse in social care, and the people we support may be generous, lonely or easily influenced. The rules are absolute, and they protect workers from suspicion as well as protecting the person.

- **Never accept money, tips or gifts of value** from a person we support or their family, however insistent they are. Explain kindly that you are not allowed, and tell the office. A small token at Christmas, such as a box of chocolates for the team, may be accepted only with the Registered Manager's agreement and is recorded in the gifts register;

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

- **Never lend or borrow money**, in either direction, including small amounts, and never pay for something out of your own pocket without agreement;
- **Never accept a gift, bequest or legacy in a will**, and tell the Registered Manager immediately if you are told you are in someone's will;
- **Never act as a witness** to a will, a power of attorney or any legal document, and never help someone write one;
- **Never become an attorney, deputy, appointee or executor** for a person we support;
- **Never take on control of someone's money, bank card or PIN** except as set out in the Handling Money and Property Policy, with receipts and records;
- **Never sell anything to a person we support**, ask them to sponsor you, sell raffle tickets, or promote a business to them;
- **Never ask a person to help you financially**, discuss your own money problems with them, or accept an offer of help;
- **Never take anything from a person's home**, including food, drink, toiletries or items being thrown away, without explicit agreement recorded with the office.

5.2 Any offer of money, a gift or a bequest is reported to the office the same day and recorded, whether or not it was accepted. Recording an offer you refused protects you.

6. PRIVATE WORK AND SECOND JOBS

6.1 Workers must not carry out private work, paid or unpaid, for anyone they support through Supportive Bridge, or for their family, and must not accept an approach to do so. This includes cleaning, shopping, babysitting, gardening, decorating or additional care hours.

6.2 If a person or family asks, the worker should say kindly that they are not able to, and tell the office the same day. The office will speak to the person about how to get the extra support they want.

6.3 This is not about restricting anyone's earnings. Private arrangements leave the person unprotected, with no insurance, no supervision, no records and no one to complain to, and they expose the worker to allegations with no way to defend themselves.

6.4 Other employment outside Supportive Bridge is allowed, provided it does not create a conflict of interest, affect performance, or breach the Working Time Regulations. Workers must tell the Registered Manager about other work, including other care employers.

7. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

7.1 Any sexual, romantic or intimate relationship between a worker and a person we support is strictly prohibited and is gross misconduct, whatever the person's capacity and whatever the worker believes about consent. The imbalance of power makes genuine consent impossible in this context, and it may also be a criminal offence where the person lacks capacity.

7.2 Workers must tell the Registered Manager if:

- they already know, or are related to, a person referred to our service;
- a person or family member expresses romantic or sexual interest in them;
- they develop feelings for a person they support;
- they are in a relationship with a colleague, where one manages or supervises the other.

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

7.3 None of these is automatically a problem, and disclosing early usually means a simple change of allocation rather than any action. Concealing them is the problem.

7.4 Sexual harassment of colleagues, people we support or anyone else is never tolerated and is gross misconduct. We also take active steps to protect our workers from harassment by others, as set out in our Equality policies.

8. PERSONAL CONTACT, PHONES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- do not give a person or their family your personal phone number, address, email or social media details;
- do not accept or send friend or follower requests to people we support or their families;
- do not contact a person we support outside working hours, including after the service ends;
- do not post anything about your work, the people we support, their homes, families or your colleagues on social media, even without names, and even in a closed group;
- do not take photographs or video of a person, their home, their records or a screen on a personal phone;
- do not check your personal phone, take personal calls or send messages during a shift, other than a genuine emergency or where the person is happy for you to show them something;
- do not play music, watch videos or use headphones during a shift unless the person has asked for it;
- do not use a person's phone, wifi, television or computer for your own purposes.

8.1 Comments online that are discriminatory, abusive or that bring the company into disrepute may lead to disciplinary action even when posted from a personal account in your own time.

9. IN THE PERSON'S HOME

9.1 You are a guest. Behave as one:

- knock, announce yourself, show your ID and wait to be invited in;
- respect house rules, including removing shoes if asked;
- do not bring your children, partner, friends or pets to a shift;
- do not smoke or vape in a person's home or garden, and do not smoke in your car with a person in it. If you smoke before a shift, be mindful that the smell lingers;
- do not eat the person's food or drink, or make yourself a drink, unless they have offered and you have recorded it;
- do not use the person's toilet without asking;
- do not invite anyone else into the home;
- do not look through cupboards, post, paperwork or belongings beyond what the support requires;
- do not move or borrow anything, including books, tools or equipment;
- leave the home as you found it, secure, and with the person comfortable.

10. PERSONAL PRESENTATION AND FITNESS FOR WORK

10.1 Workers must arrive clean, presentable and in appropriate clothing, wear their ID badge visibly, and follow the bare below the elbow rule during support tasks, as set out in our Infection Prevention and Control Policy.

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

10.2 No one may work while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including the after-effects of the night before. Prescription or over-the-counter medicines that may cause drowsiness must be declared to the Registered Manager so that adjustments can be made. Attending a shift unfit to work is gross misconduct, and a worker suspected of being unfit will be sent home and the shift covered.

10.3 Where a worker has a problem with alcohol or drugs and tells us before it affects their work, we will support them to get help wherever we can.

11. HONESTY AND RECORDS

11.1 Records are legal documents. Workers must never:

- record a task as done when it was not;
- sign a MAR chart for medicines not given, or in advance;
- log in or out at a time other than when they actually arrived or left, or ask a colleague to do so;
- claim hours or mileage not worked;
- alter a record after the event, other than by a properly signed correction;
- give false information on an application form, timesheet or expense claim.

11.2 Falsifying any record is gross misconduct and may be fraud.

12. DISCRIMINATION, BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

12.1 We do not tolerate discrimination, bullying or harassment by anyone, towards anyone: people we support, colleagues, families or members of the public. This includes jokes, comments and "banter" about a person's age, disability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or any other characteristic.

12.2 Workers who experience or witness this should report it to the Registered Manager or use our Whistleblowing Policy. Abuse of our workers by a person we support or their family is taken seriously and will be addressed.

13. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

13.1 Workers must declare to the Registered Manager anything that could be, or appear to be, a conflict of interest, including: a family or personal relationship with someone we support or with a colleague they manage; a financial interest in a supplier; other employment with a competitor; and any offer of hospitality or inducement from a supplier or client.

13.2 Declarations are recorded and, where needed, managed by changing allocation or removing the worker from a decision. Declaring is straightforward; failing to declare is the problem.

14. WHEN SOMEONE LEAVES

14.1 Professional boundaries continue after the working relationship ends. Workers who leave must not contact people they supported, take up private work with them, or use anything they learned about them. Confidentiality lasts indefinitely.

14.2 All ID badges, keys, equipment, uniforms and records are returned on the last working day, and system access is removed the same day.

15. EXAMPLES OF GROSS MISCONDUCT

15.1 The following are examples, not a complete list:

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

- abuse, neglect or ill-treatment of a person we support;
- a sexual or romantic relationship with a person we support;
- theft, fraud, or misuse of a person's money or property;
- accepting money or a bequest contrary to this policy;
- falsifying any record, timesheet or MAR chart;
- working while unfit through alcohol or drugs;
- serious breach of confidentiality, including posting about work on social media;
- carrying out a task the worker is not trained or authorised for, causing risk of harm;
- failing to report a safeguarding concern;
- discrimination, harassment or violence;
- abandoning a person, or leaving a shift without authority;
- deliberately concealing a serious mistake.

16. SUPPORT, TRAINING AND DECLARATIONS

16.1 This policy is issued at induction and every worker signs to confirm they have read and understood it. It is covered in induction training, revisited at least every year, and discussed in supervision.

16.2 Boundaries are a standing item in supervision, so that workers can raise awkward situations early and get support rather than carrying them alone.

16.3 Workers complete an annual declaration confirming they have no undeclared gifts, private work, relationships or conflicts of interest (Appendix A).

17. MONITORING AND REVIEW

17.1 The Registered Manager keeps a gifts and hospitality register and a declarations of interest register, and reviews both at least twice a year. Boundary issues raised in supervision, spot checks, complaints and safeguarding concerns are analysed for patterns.

17.2 This policy is reviewed every year, or sooner if an incident shows it needs to change.

18. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

- Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, especially Regulations 13, 17, 19 and 20
- Care Act 2014
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Sexual Offences Act 2003, sections 38 to 42 (care workers and people with a mental disorder)
- Fraud Act 2006 and Theft Act 1968
- Bribery Act 2010
- Equality Act 2010
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018
- Code of Conduct for Healthcare Support Workers and Adult Social Care Workers in England (Skills for Care)

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

- Working Time Regulations 1998

19. RELATED POLICIES AND FORMS

Related policies: Safeguarding Adults; Handling Money and Property; Whistleblowing; Disciplinary; Grievance; Data Protection and Confidentiality; Social Media and Mobile Phones; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Staff); Equality, Diversity, Dignity and Respect; Lone Working; Supervision and Appraisal; Safer Recruitment, Selection and DBS.

Forms: Code of Conduct signature sheet; Annual Declaration (Appendix A); Gifts and Hospitality Register; Declarations of Interest Register.

20. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version	Date	Approved by	Role	Reason
1.0			Nominated Individual	New policy for local authority assurance and CQC registration

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

APPENDIX A: ANNUAL DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE SHEET

Every worker completes this at induction and once a year. Declaring something does not mean you are in trouble; not declaring it does.

Name: _____ Role: _____ Date: _____

Question	Yes / No	If yes, give details
Have you accepted any gift, money or hospitality from a person we support or their family?		
Have you been told you are named in the will of anyone we support?		
Have you lent money to, or borrowed money from, anyone we support?		
Do you carry out any private work for anyone we support or their family?		
Are you related to, or in a personal relationship with, anyone we support?		
Are you in a relationship with a colleague you manage or who manages you?		
Do you hold any role such as attorney, deputy, appointee or executor for anyone we support?		
Do you have any other employment, including with another care provider?		
Do you have any financial interest in a supplier to the company?		
Is there anything else that could be seen as a conflict of interest?		

Declaration: I have read and understood the Staff Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries Policy. I understand that breaching it may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal, and in serious cases to referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and the police. The answers above are true and complete.

Signed: _____ Date: _____ Manager: _____ Date: _____

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.