

Boundaries Policy and Procedures

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the standards and expectations for how staff, trustees, freelance staff and artists, and volunteers within Suffolk Artlink maintain professional relationships with beneficiaries.

We recognise that boundaries can sometimes feel unclear and distinguishing between professional and personal interactions may be challenging. Suffolk Artlink acknowledges the pressures people face in their day-to-day work and is committed to supporting them in navigating these complexities.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish clear expectations of behaviour for all staff, trustees, freelance staff and artists, and volunteers.

- Provide guidance and support to help avoid situations that could compromise professional integrity.

- Protect service users and former service users from abuse, exploitation, or inappropriate behaviour.

- Reduce uncertainty and confusion for all parties involved.

- Promote and strengthen healthy, respectful relationships in line with Suffolk Artlink's aims and values.

This policy exists to safeguard both beneficiaries and those who work with them, ensuring that all interactions are professional, ethical, and conducive to positive outcomes.

2. Scope

This policy and procedure applies to everyone working/ volunteering on behalf of Suffolk Artlink including the board of trustees and freelance artists and contractors.

3. Policy

Suffolk Artlink is committed to maintaining clear and professional boundaries between staff, volunteers and beneficiaries to ensure safety, trust, and integrity in all interactions. We recognise that strong boundaries are essential for safeguarding, ethical practice and the wellbeing of everyone involved.

All staff and volunteers are expected to act in a manner that reflects the Suffolk Artlink's values, safeguarding responsibilities, and professional codes of conduct. Breaches of this policy will be treated seriously and addressed in line with disciplinary and safeguarding procedures.

4. Procedures

To support staff and volunteers Suffolk Artlink's procedures and guidance (Appendix A) are to be followed to support staff and volunteers make effective decisions in their role.

4.1 Understanding Boundaries

All staff and volunteers will complete appropriate induction and training on professional boundaries and safeguarding as necessary for their role. Clear examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours will be provided including Appendix A, which is not exhaustive and does not substitute for advice from the line manager. They contain:

- Questions that staff should ask themselves at all times

- Guidelines, which should only be departed from with the consent of the line manager

- Rules that in no circumstances can be broken

4.2. Communication Guidelines

- Use professional language and tone in all interactions.

- Avoid sharing personal contact details (e.g., personal phone numbers, social media accounts).

- Communicate through approved organisational channels only.

4.3. Physical Contact

- Physical contact should only occur when necessary for care, safety, or support, and must be appropriate and proportionate.

Never initiate or engage in physical contact that could be perceived as intimate or inappropriate.

4.4. Social Media and Online Interaction

Do not connect with beneficiaries on personal social media accounts.

Follow organisational guidance for online communication and digital safeguarding.

4.5. Gifts

Do not give or accept personal gifts from beneficiaries.

Avoid any behaviour that could be perceived as favouritism or special treatment.

4.6. Managing Dual Relationships

Declare any pre-existing personal relationships with beneficiaries to your line manager.

Avoid situations where personal and professional roles overlap.

4.7. Responding to Boundary Concerns

If a situation feels uncomfortable or unclear seek advice from your line manager immediately.

Report any breaches or suspected breaches of boundaries through the Suffolk Artlink's safeguarding or whistleblowing procedures.

4.8 Transport

Staff should not use personal transport to convey service users to activities/events. In the most exceptional circumstances, where not to do so would put someone at immediate risk of harm) with the express prior permission of a Director, transport may be provided.

5. Monitoring and Review

This policy and related procedures and guidance will be monitored by the Suffolk Artlink Board members on a regular basis for compliance and will be reviewed at least triennially.

Date approved or amended	Signed	Role
20/07/2026	Alistair Winch	Company Secretary on behalf of the Board of trustees

Appendix A

Boundaries Guidelines

As staff and volunteers it is paramount that we understand the form in which our relationship with beneficiaries takes place. The relationship between staff, volunteers and beneficiaries can be a 'grey' area where the professional and personal boundaries can be difficult to judge and distinguish between.

The following guidelines must be followed.

The guidelines are broken into four areas, these are:

- 1) Questions that staff should ask themselves at all times
- 2) Areas where problems have been found to occur
- 3) 'Rule of thumb' guidelines: departure from these guidelines should only be done with the knowledge and consent of the line manager.
- 4) 'Hard and fast' rules, where there does not seem to be any possible justification for breaking them.

1) Questions that staff should ask themselves at all times

- Whose needs are these meeting: mine or the beneficiaries?
- Am I prepared to do this openly or not? If not, why not?
- Will this action leave me or my team/Suffolk Artlink open to reasonable criticism? If it will, is there anything I can do to safeguard against this?
- What role does the beneficiary see me in? Is the beneficiary able to see me in more than one role and will this action cause confusion to the beneficiary in the area?
- Will this action lead others to see this beneficiary as my 'favourite'?
- If a beneficiary objected to this, would/could the beneficiary make these feelings known?
- What responsibility do I have for this beneficiary if we meet 'off-duty'?
- Will this action undermine the work of myself or other professional staff in the future?

2) Actions where departing from them should only be done with the knowledge and consent of the manager

- Having members of your own family coming into the workplace or being involved with beneficiaries.
- Inappropriate disclosure to beneficiaries about your own personal life
- Meeting beneficiaries socially when off duty
- Staff must avoid physical contact with beneficiaries at all times
- Beneficiaries undertaking work for staff or volunteers
- Accepting gifts from beneficiaries or their relatives
- Drinking alcohol when on working or volunteering
- Staff and volunteers should not arrange to see beneficiaries when off duty. If they happen to meet beneficiaries they must remember not to compromise their professional role.
- Staff and volunteers must not witness wills or be named executors
- Staff and volunteers must not buy or sell things to or from beneficiaries

- Staff and volunteers must not accept either for themselves or their families free services from beneficiaries, where such services should normally be charged for

3) Rules where there are no circumstances in which they could be broken

- Staff, volunteers must not have a sexual relationship with beneficiaries
- Staff and volunteers must not borrow money from beneficiaries
- Staff and volunteers must not invite beneficiaries to their own home
- Staff and volunteers must not give their personal phone numbers, email addresses, social media accounts or home address to beneficiaries
- Staff and volunteers must not give or loan their own money to beneficiaries.
- Staff and volunteers must not make themselves available to beneficiaries when at home and/or off duty.