



Severn Group

Relationships at Work Policy

MAY 2023

Defined by fairness and transparency, underpinned by inclusive communication to inspire trust and respect; we challenge and support one another to achieve our shared goals.

Introduction

We understand that you may meet your partner at work and that personal relationships are inevitable. The purpose of this Policy is to govern personal relationships in the workplace while respecting your right to a private life. This Policy does not prohibit you from having a personal relationship with another employee but instead, sets out guidelines for conduct within the workplace and provides a framework for line managers to deal with personal relationships which may affect the business.

Who does this Policy apply to?

This Policy applies to all employees, officers, consultants, self-employed contractors, casual workers, agency workers, volunteers, and interns.

Who is responsible for this Policy?

The Executive Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this Policy. The Executive Committee has delegated responsibility for overseeing its implementation to the Chief People Officer. Suggestions for changes to this Policy should be reported to the Chief People Officer.

Any questions you may have about the day-to-day application of this Policy should be referred to your line manager in the first instance.

Definition of personal relationship

When we use the phrase "personal relationship" in this Policy, we mean any emotional or romantic relationship which goes beyond the normally accepted boundaries of the professional sphere between employees. This will include formal, family relationships (for example, where people are married or living together). It will also include less formal situations (for example, where the parties consider that they are "seeing each other" or "going out together").

This definition is not intended to be exhaustive. Given the sensitive nature of personal relationships, you are required to use common sense in assessing whether or not this Policy is relevant to you. If you are unsure whether this Policy applies to you, you should speak to your line manager or the People Team in confidence about your situation.

This definition includes all personal relationships between employees, regardless of whether you work in the same team, department, division, region, office, or at the same site.

The Process

Our Policy's purpose

In many cases, your personal relationship will not interfere with work. However, sometimes a personal relationship will be or become problematic because it adversely impacts on other employees or negatively affects business efficiency. Personal relationships can be particularly problematic where they involve members of the same team or are between a supervisor or manager and subordinate.

This means that personal relationships are potentially a legitimate management concern. In issuing this Policy, we seek to address the following, non-exhaustive, issues which may arise where there is a personal relationship:

- Lack of transparency in relation to workplace matters.
- Risks to the confidentiality of business information.
- Legal risks regarding discrimination and harassment.
- Potential conflicts of interest of those involved in personal relationships.
- Actual or perceived bias regarding recruitment, promotion, rostering, annual leave allocation, appraisals, discipline and grievance and other operational matters where staff in a personal relationship are also in a direct reporting or subordinate relationship.
- Potential for negative effect on general public perception of fairness, objectivity, and impartiality.
- Embarrassment of other employees.
- Fear of favouritism by other employees.
- General adverse impact on team dynamics and reduction in team morale.
- Outputs may be disrupted in the event of relationship breakdown.
- Impact on management resources and increased legal risks in the event of relationship breakdown.

Management guidelines

Where a line manager becomes aware that a member of their team is in a personal relationship with another employee, they are required to treat this sensitively and, as far as possible, in confidence.

Most personal relationships should not have a significant impact on the workplace or efficiency of work. However, managers need to recognise their responsibility to all team members and to the needs of the Company.

The Process

No action should be taken simply because you are in a personal relationship with another employee. Only if there is an issue or risk as outlined above should action be considered.

Line managers will know that they must not discriminate against you on various protected grounds. They should particularly consider the characteristics of sex, sexual orientation, and age before taking any action as a result of a personal relationship. For example, it should not be assumed that the more junior person in a couple will be transferred out of a team, as this could be indirectly discriminatory.

Line managers should be aware that conduct directed towards an employee for personal reasons may be unwanted and that, in some circumstances, this could amount to unlawful harassment for which the employer could be liable. We will take any grievances (formal or informal) very seriously and investigate these without delay. Line managers should escalate any complaints of this nature to the People Team as soon as possible.

Any information regarding personal relationships is confidential and likely to be protected under data protection laws. Line managers are reminded about their data protection obligations under the law and our Employee Data Protection Policy, including ensuring the security of such information.

Line managers are also reminded that we have a duty to protect the health and safety of our employees and that this includes mental health. If a line manager has concerns regarding the health impact of a personal relationship on a member of staff, they should bring this to the attention of the People Team without delay.

Given the highly sensitive nature of personal relationships, line managers should seek the assistance of the People Team before dealing with any issues which may arise. They should also ensure that a formal note is taken of any meetings to discuss personal relationships.

Conduct of those in personal relationships

If you are in a personal relationship, you are expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner at work at all times in respect of such relationship. This means being considerate of the feelings of other employees in your day-to-day dealings and being discreet in any discussions regarding your private life within the workplace. Public displays of affection are inappropriate in the work sphere.

The Process

Our equipment and resources are provided for work purposes only. Any inappropriate use in furtherance of a personal relationship will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Our confidentiality rules continue to apply regardless of any personal relationship. You must ensure that you protect all confidential and commercially sensitive information from unauthorised disclosure.

If your personal relationship involves a direct or indirect reporting line or a manager/subordinate role, you are both required to disclose this by informing the People Team, in confidence, as soon as reasonably practicable. While there is no formal requirement for you to disclose if you are not in a manager/subordinate relationship, you should consider whether it may be appropriate to inform your line manager in any event or whether, having regard to your general duties of good faith towards your employer, they do so in relevant circumstances. For example, if there is a risk of a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest arising.

As a matter of policy, if you are in a personal relationship you should not also be in line manager/subordinate roles in the workplace. Where such a personal relationship arises, both parties are required to inform the People Team, in confidence, as soon as reasonably practicable. We will then liaise with you and those involved to agree a plan to minimise the impact of the personal relationship on the business. This is likely to involve transferring one or both of you from your current role(s). This will only be done with the agreement of those affected. If this is not possible for operational reasons, then we will consider putting in place appropriate safeguards to ensure transparency and fairness.

Failure to disclose a personal relationship as required by this Policy will be treated as a disciplinary matter and, subject to investigation, could result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Discrimination, harassment, and other policies

You are reminded that you are subject to our policies on equality and diversity, discrimination and harassment, confidentiality and trade secrets and data protection, and that breach of these policies may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

The Process

We are committed to providing a workplace which is fair and equal. Nobody will be disadvantaged, discriminated against, or otherwise subjected to a detriment because they are in a personal relationship. If you have concerns about your treatment you should raise this informally with your line manager in the first instance (if appropriate), or otherwise use the formal grievance procedure.

We will not tolerate any form of harassment and will take any allegations extremely seriously. You are reminded to consider your legal obligations towards colleagues. These may be especially pertinent at the beginning or end of a relationship when professionalism and discretion will be particularly important.

Data protection

For information about our processing of personal data under this Policy, including details of our legal grounds for doing so, how long we retain such personal data, who your personal data is shared with, your rights under data protection law and who you should contact if you have any concerns, please see our Employee Privacy Notice, which can be accessed via the Group Policy Hub, Cezanne or a copy obtained from the People Team.

Agreement to follow this Policy

This Policy is fully supported by the Executive Committee. This Policy is non-contractual, and the Company reserves the right to update it at any time.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Employee Data Protection Policy, Employee Privacy Notice and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy.



At Severn, our business success flows from expertise – from technical knowledge and experience that position us as a leader in our field. Not everything, however, can be engineered. The Values which underpin that success stem instinctively from the culture we seek to sustain. Everything we do is tested against our Values, and our people are encouraged to apply them every day: they are the stewards of our brand, our reputation, our heritage, our ambitions.



Customer



Integrity



Excellence



Accountability



SEVERN
Superior Valve Engineering